CAP'N SIMEON'S STORE

GEORGE S. WASSON

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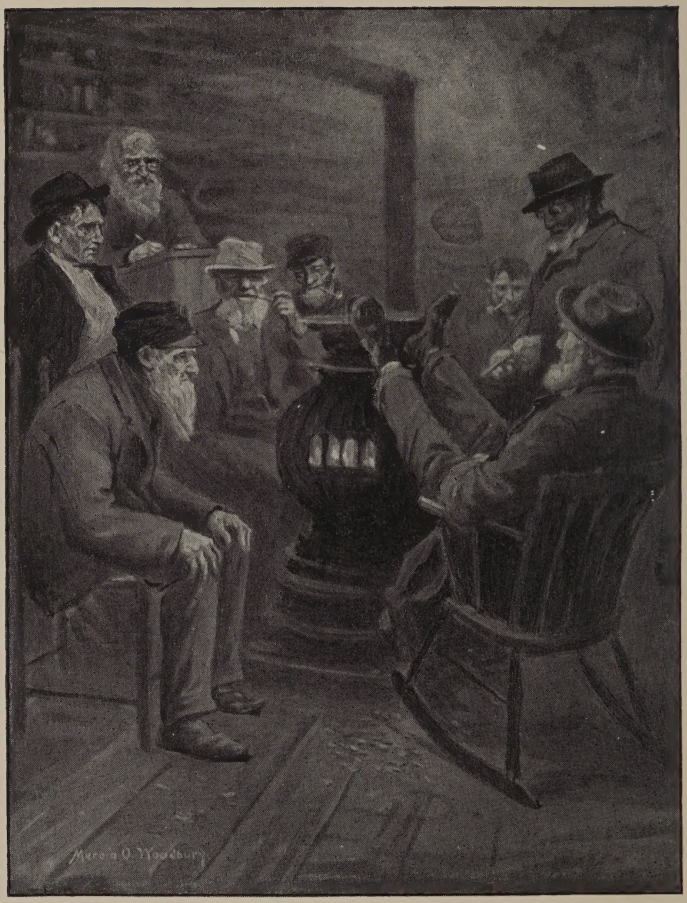

AN EVENING AT THE STORE

CAP'N SIMEON'S STORE

BY

GEORGE S. WASSON

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CAP'N SIMEON'S STORE

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I

KILLICK COVE AND SIMEON'S STORE

In the drowsy quiet at present pervading the remote coast village of Killick Cove, it is hard to realize the bustling activity of former years as soon as the ice left its little harbor in the early spring, and slowly streamed out past the white lighthouse to sea with the ebb tide, in an endless procession of glistening cakes. This long-waited event was always the signal for work on the fleet of fishermen and coasters that had lain frozen in solidly all winter, but which now must be hauled alongside the cob-wharves to refit for another season.

For months the fishing skippers had dickered among the young men of the place, securing crews to their liking; and since snow first flew in the fall infirm old people of both sexes had busied themselves with picking oakum in preparation for the exciting period of calking and general over-

hauling in the spring; for next to the glory of being "high-line" at the season's close, was held that of being the first to fit out and fill away with a cheer for the Cape Shore at its opening.

On every short stretch of shingle beach between ledges on the shore lay a chubby little schooner heeled down, her crew at work like beavers scrubbing the bottom with birch brooms, or trying the seams in readiness for a coat of tar.

At each rude little wharf was a vessel waiting her turn for being laid down on the first vacant bit of beach; the crew also busy scraping spars, tarring decks and rigging, or bending sails. From daylight till dark was heard incessantly the sound of the calker's mallet and the carpenter's axe, the creaking of blocks and the men's shouts, while the chilly east winds constantly wafted inland the black smoke and smell of tar.

To-day, however, the location of these wharves, then dotting the shore at every available point, can be determined only by heaps of kelp-grown stones and perhaps a few great pine logs hoary with barnacles. The rocky fields along shore, once covered with fish-flakes and alive with a roystering crew of men and women making the fares of the vessels, are now deserted and overrun with whiteweed and clover.

The beaches between the ledges are nearly empty, or at best haunted for a brief season in the summer by certain elderly female "rusticators," who, surrounded by the paraphernalia of their art and barefooted children, often struggle manfully beneath white umbrellas to depict some ancient dory; the result invariably being that well-known mumpish affair, which, if materialized and launched, would float evenly only from politeness to the sex, and in sheer defiance of natural laws.

Of the numerous storehouses and other buildings connected with the wharves, two or three still linger, tenanted only by woodpeckers and swallows, and supported in an infirm old age by vessel's spars braced against their bulging sides.

But of the fleet of sturdy little vessels, once the pride of Killick Cove, still less remains to be seen. Lying among the dusty burdocks and thistles by the side of the plankwalk along the shore front are many weather-beaten spars and wooden-stocked anchors, with rusting heaps of chain cable. Old seine-boats, davits, wheels, and rotting fragments of vessels litter the ground on both sides of this road. The sidewalk itself is largely built of vessel's planking, streaked by rust and riddled thickly with treenail holes. In many yards cabooses serve as henhouses, and numerous woodsheds throughout

the village are tricked out famously with carvings from the stern or prow of some crack old-timer.

Away up at the Head of the Cove is the graveyard of the fleet, and here, side by side, rest the bones of such vessels as survived the dangers of the sea, and after long years of service returned to die in the Cove.

Incrusted with barnacles and festooned by kelp, the gulls always circling and screaming above them, lie these dismal reminders of the little town's halcyon days; the Harvester, and the Good Intent; the Emblem, School Girl, and Only Son, with others, including several whose identity has long been lost, but which tradition affirms date back to the privateering days of 1812.

Occasionally, when some far-draining tide lays bare the gleaming flats almost to the green fringe of eel-grass marking the channel's edge, may be seen yet another relic of the past, flattened by the ice of sixty winters into a shapeless mass, but still recognized as the old schooner Patriot, in which Skipper Joshua Kentle once landed the greatest trip of fish ever brought to the Cove from the coast of Labrador. For more than half a century the old man has slept with brother skippers among the ledges behind the gray little meeting-house on the hill, yet as often as spring tides recede so that

the Patriot's brown bones are seen from the village, so often is Skipper Joshua recalled in Killick Cove, and his famous fare of fish again landed, and spread upon the flakes by the shore.

Of the old guard of skippers, — the "Bay-men," "Labrador-men," and "Bankers," only a very few remain. One after another they are laid away on the rocky hill, and the cracked bell of the meeting-house slowly tolls out the fact that still another old skipper is "having his funeral," as it is quaintly put in the Cove.

All along the narrow road winding between stone walls out into the lonely country beyond stand their weather-worn little one-story dwellings, some still occupied, but many abandoned, and falling into utter decay. Each spring, as soon as the raw east wind will permit, the few surviving skippers step cautiously from the houses where they have been almost hermetically sealed all winter, and sun themselves in some sheltered nook, or, if possible, join the assemblage around the great stove in the store.

Later in the season, Skipper Eben Kentle, the last of the "Bay-men," bent with the weight of over ninety years, hobbles slowly each pleasant evening down his lane to the shore, where he stands for a few moments leaning heavily with both hands upon his cane, and gazing intently across the empty

harbor towards the dismantled old hulks at the Head of the Cove. Should a neighbor be met on these nightly pilgrimages, the skipper seldom fails to inquire tremulously, "How be the Bay-men doin' of this season? Anybody got word from the vessels yit?"

Slowly his long white beard wags as he mouths the beloved quid, till at length he turns stiffly for a last long look at the weather around the horizon before again toiling up the lane to his home among the lilacs.

Poor old half-demented Skipper Eben! All the best years of his life were spent among the cold fogs of that northern clime, and fortunate it is that his last ones are bedimmed by a more kindly mist.

"Bay-men" and "Labrador-men;" vessels, wharves, and warehouses, — all are things of the past in Killick Cove to-day, yet one long-established institution flourishes amidst the general decay, and for nine months in the year might with good reason exhibit nightly the sign of "standing room only."

Every evening, with sublime indifference to the weather, numerous citizens of the Cove may be seen plodding down the winding road leading to Cap'n Simeon's Store, some smoking their after-supper pipes, and others at frequent intervals

cascading with tobacco juice the grim old ledges everywhere in evidence on this primitive highway.

The store, a long and very low shingled building, has rested its western half upon one of these ledges for more than a century, while its other half sags out over the water on green and slimy spiles. Over the entrance an ancient weather-beaten signboard dimly bears the legend, "Ship-Stores, W. I. Goods and Medicines." Steps, roughly made from the oak planks of a vessel, to which many barnacles still adhere, lead from the back entrance to a moss-grown wharf also largely built of wrecked material, on one side of which is a ladder for the sole convenience of customers from vessels in the harbor. As, however, all but the three upper rungs are missing, it behooves such customers to do their trading, if possible, at or near high water.

To the people of Killick Cove, Simeon Roundturn's store has for generations taken the place of lecture, concert, and play; or, in fact, of any entertainment whatever during the long evenings. A great wood-burning stove stands in the further end, from which a prodigious length of pipe hung by wires from the blackened ceiling finally reaches the chimney, and barely clears the heads of customers in so doing. Several small lamps, with wrinkled sheets of copper from a vessel's sheathing

tacked above them, faintly illuminate the miscellaneous stock of a country store, but in addition disclose huge bundles of dried fish stacked on the floor at one side, and, dangling like malefactors from the whitewashed beams above, a startling array of black and yellow oilskin suits, which under draughts from the open door, often revolve together in a weird reel.

Around the stove stand several venerable, bewhittled chairs, their backs and arms ingeniously held in place by elaborate lashings of cod-line and marline; the handiwork of the proprietor himself during slack hours of business, or, as he himself puts it, while "layin' becalmed;" for Simeon, like all his neighbors, has spent many years at sea, and to this day always makes his horse "fast" with a bowline or fisherman's bend.

Certain privileged characters commonly occupy these chairs immediately after supper, while other frequenters of the place are scattered about on the counter, and on nail-kegs, barrels, and boxes in various picturesque attitudes. Simeon himself, perched upon his high stool behind an inkstained desk of birch, eternally wets a great square thumb upon his tongue, and turns the pages of his ledger to and fro, but, though ostensibly thus occupied, is nevertheless taking strict note of all that is said,

and at any fresh bit of news or gossip instantly raises his shaggy eyebrows, and peers out over his silver spectacles in rapt attention.

By six o'clock the assemblage is generally complete; the air filled with smoke, and the floor sprinkled with tobacco juice, shavings, and peanut shells in the most social manner conceivable.

One of the aged chairs commonly supports with ominous creaks the massive frame of pompous old Cap'n Zenas Roundturn, long in charge of the Cove schools, sometimes a lay preacher, and always credited with a goodly bank account. He has a patriarchal white beard, and his long locks are invariably oiled with such liberality that the collar and shoulders of his black coat are practically waterproof. The Captain is famed far and near alike for his power as a speaker, his profound learning on all subjects, and his professed contempt for newspapers and all who heave away money upon them. Many of his most impassioned oratorical efforts have been in denunciation of the "despiseable, lyin' press," though it is generally believed in Killick Cove that Cap'n Roundturn surreptitiously devours the contents of a certain weekly paper with great avidity.

Although Skipper Job Gaskett resides over a mile distant on the Lower Neck road, the remark

is frequently heard that it never yet stormed hard enough since he left off "going," to prevent his appropriating a chair in the store within a surprisingly short time after swallowing his evening meal.

Skipper Job comes of a family long known as dreamers and seers of visions, and he in particular is a recognized repository for the many superstitions and all the witch-lore of the vicinity. His is also essentially a constructive mind, and his views on the origin of things in general, on astronomy and kindred matters, are, like those of other independent thinkers of Killick Cove, by no means in strict accordance with text-books. Generous to a fault, honest, and full of fun, Skipper Job Gaskett is a general favorite, and without his kindly, clean-shaven face the gatherings at Simeon's Store would seem dull indeed.

Cap'n Isaac Windseye, also known as Sheriff Windseye, ex-Representative, latterly chief pillar of the church, and magnate of the Cove, may invariably be counted upon as having secured one of the chairs, in which he tilts back against the counter, and unceasingly whittles upon soft bits of wood carefully selected from the cover of some adjacent box. The Sheriff is a wheezy, round-shouldered little man, who shaves the back of his neck, and on

whose purple-dyed, stubby chin whiskers may always be seen distinct traces of the tobacco habit. He has a shifty pig-eye, and podgy, freckled hands with nails of the deepest jet, and, under a consuming desire for the post-office, recently "shifted" his politics for the fourth time.

In Killick Cove, it may be explained, those alone having had charge of fishing vessels are known as "Skippers;" the title of "Cap'n" being claimed only by masters of coasting craft. In early life Cap'n Isaac Windseye won his title through transporting slab-wood by sloop from the Kennebec River across some dozen miles of turbulent sea to the teeming metropolis of Bayport, but having thus laid by a sufficient sum, at once abandoned this perilous occupation, and ever after prospered upon his native heath chiefly in the congenial capacity of a money-lender.

Among his many prejudices, prominent just at present is a most violent one against the prevailing impression that the earth is round; a notion really offensive to his logical mind, as well as to not a few of his townsmen.

"Jest only you take and think a secont," he argues. "Ef the world is round, same 's some on 'em claims, why, folks in Chiny are goin' to be standin' plumb on their heads for a dead sure thing;

you can't never git round that, noways! Wal now, sir, how long can *you*, or ary other man, I don't give a rap who it is, how long will you un'take to stand it hangin' with your head down, for king's sakes! I'll bate high you can't stick her out not over five minutes' time at the very furtherest, but still here 's all these here college fellers yappin' allus and forever, 'The world she 's round!' and printin' sich blame' krawm into our young ones' school books right along, too! There hain't an ioty o' truth into sich like rubbidge, I tell ye. I never took stock into it sence I was the bigness of a trawl-kag; no more 'n what I do into that rot they pretend to call grav'tation!"

Skipper Job Gaskett, though at present bitterly opposed to the Sheriff politically, agrees with him fully that the world is undoubtedly flat, though chiefly from the fact that a flat chart is used in navigation without apparent difficulty. The fact that one may travel continually away from a given point on the earth, and yet finally return to it, he attributes easily to variation of the compass, but both he and the Sheriff, having scarcely ever been off soundings themselves, eagerly cite the testimony of the late Cap'n Shubael Gaskett of Killick Cove, who, in the old brig Splendid, is said to have made numerous foreign voyages using flat charts, and

who stoutly maintained to his dying day that the earth was as flat as a pancake.

The researches of Skipper Job have, however, of late been chiefly directed towards the orb of night, and as a result he entertains what may be termed somewhat advanced ideas concerning that luminary.

"I 've sot night after night of late and studied up the moon in good shape," he recently declared, "and I 'm tellin' of ye flat-footed, she ain't inhabited, not by a jugful, she ain't. But jest for the argyment like, we 'll take and supposen she *is*, and that there 's any slues and slathers of folks livin' onto her, we 'll say. This is when she 's real good and full, mind you. Now what makes out to take my tail down is jest this 'ere; how in the name o' Sam Hyde can all them same crowd o' folks stick onto her by the time she 's all shrunk up to her last quarter, you?"

This staggering argument creates an evident sensation upon the egg-boxes and meal-sacks. Even the erudite Cap'n Roundturn admits its force. The moon, he says, certainly does "gather herself up" periodically in a most singular manner, but he frankly declares himself at present wholly unable to account for so strange a freak on her part.

But the conversation having thus taken an astro-

nomical turn, Skipper Job Gaskett is reminded of his queer experience on several recent evenings when returning home from the store.

"You know that 'ere piece of clear ground up atop of Kentles's Hill, there jest after you pass Number One schoolhouse? Wal, sir, I had only jest struck out o' them woods into that openin' the other night, when I see a big star fetch away nigh over my head, and jest draw a bead dead for the very same spot I was standin' to. I lep', I 'll bate, ten foot the fust clip; chock into the ditch anyways I lep'; and the blame' thing struck one o' the laidges in the middle of the road with a devil of a plunk, now I tell ye what! Quite a few of the pieces flew clean down acrost the pasture into the mill-crik there, for I heerd 'em sizzle when they struck the water, plain as could be!

"Wal, sir, the very next night 't was, I was passing along the same pertikler spot, with my great-coat on my arm. It was that last thaw ever we had, you rec'lect. The weather she commenced mortifyin' so fast that evenin', that come to strike out for home I could n't stand no great-coat, she had turned to and mortified down so muggy-like. Fust thing ever I knowed, there come a spittin', fizzlin' kind o' sound behind me, and I took notice the whole road was commencing to light up sort o'

blue-green like. I wa'n't by no means skeert, but set-fire, you! it give me suppn' of a start all the same, so 's I fetched a jump around consid'ble quick, and blow my shirt ef there wa'n't another one o' them dinged ole stars streaking of it down the road not over six foot high from the ground, hissin' and fizzlin' for all she was wuth, now I tell ye! She was about the bigness of a hen's egg, I cal'lated; that is, the fire-red part was; but she had a black head onto her, and jest nothin' only one stiddy stream of fire and sparks in her wake, much as twenty foot long.

"Nach'ally I was some nerved for a secont or two at the fust send-off, but then, thinks I right away, 'Hell,' thinks I, 'stars is nothin' only so many garss-balls, anyways! Guess I 'll try seining of ye, this time!' She wa'n't going so very fast, you un'stand; prob'ly I could run as fast as what she was travelin'; so I jest spread out my great-coat with both arms, and faced her, cal'latin' to take and stiffle the dod-blowed thing ef ever I could make out to purse my seine chock round her in good shape. Jest that minute, though, be jiggered ef she did n't turn to and fetch a sheer like to the nor'ard, and down she went ker-slap into Amis Kentles's mowin'-lot, behin' them alders there. I took and clim over the wall quick 's ever I could,

and hunted round for quite a spell, but never sighted her ag'in.

"That 's a master-place, though, for stars to fall, up atop o' that hill, and I cal'late it 's the high ground is drawrin' to 'em like. I 've seen a dezen or more up there this winter so fur, and ef ever I git another hack at one o' them slow-goin', black-headed creeturs, I 'll make out to gaft onto her someways or 'nother, ef it takes a leg."

"Seems 's though I would lievser not tech them kind o' things, Job," said Cap'n Roundturn. "They ain't any too pooty to run afoul on, them things ain't."

But in total disregard of this friendly warning, Job Gaskett merely reiterated his firm intention of seining a star at the earliest opportunity, and of selling her to the rusticators at a fancy price for exhibition purposes in a college.

A slight lull follows this recital of Skipper Job's singular experience. "What was the weather predicament in your paper to-day, Simeon?" at length inquired Sheriff Windseye. And Simeon, after replying, takes a hand lamp from the desk, and examines a long barometer that has hung in a niche behind him ever since he took it from the cabin of his schooner and gave up "going," away back in the sixties.

"My glass don't appear to call for no sich programme as them gov'ment sharps gives us. She has fell two tenths sence noontime, and I should sooner say this wind will backen in afore mornin', and blow like a man from the nor'ard and west'ard."

At this forecast, winks are exchanged between the younger members of the company, among whom Simeon's frequent predictions of foul weather are a standing joke. A fleet of coasters detained in the harbor means an increase of trade for him, and this fact is supposed by some to rather bias his readings of the barometer.

But the subject of the weather having been broached, nearly all take a hand in the discussion; a majority, however, favoring Simeon's idea that the wind will both "backen in" and "breezen up" before morning, while others, though admitting that the sun undoubtedly was "setting up shrouds and backstays" shortly before disappearing, still predict that the moon will succeed in drinking up all such unfavorable signs, and that a good fish-day for the shore boats will follow.

Meantime, Simeon has carefully shut off all draughts in the stove, and is closing his green-painted shutters for the night.

II

HOSS-SENSE *vs.* BOOK-LEARNING

"WHY wa'n't you down the ro'd last night, Cap'n Ike?" asked Asa Fairway of Sheriff Windseye one evening, as he skillfully opened a refractory jackknife with his teeth.

"Wal, you!" said the Sheriff, "I ain't wholly red o' that last attack of rheumatiz yit awhile, and she turned to and stormed and blowed so like seven devils, thinks I, I full better try putting in the evenin' to home, someways. The woman she went to work and rummaged me up one o' them hist'ry books 'way up attic there some place or 'nother; guess likely 't was one o' them her ole sir used to read outen. I know one time there was much as half a dezen on 'em kickin' round under foot up attic there amongst the rest-part o' the krawm and sculch. I jest laid right down on the longe in the settin'-room, and took things about as easy 's ole Tilley's shoe, now you can bate.

"Seems 's though there was a pair on 'em turned to and fit a duel with one another clean away back

there in the fust cent'ry somewheres, and I laid there last evenin' jest a-takin' my comfort, and reading up all the pertiklers till nigh eleven o'clock."

"The fust cent'ry?" repeated Cap'n Roundturn, always somewhat given to doubting the statements of his less learned neighbors. "Le's jest turn to and overhaul that there a grain like. I ruther misdoubt myself ef you 'll find languages was fust perfunded till consid'ble after that there. Jest when will ye pretend to call your fust cent'ry, anyways now?"

"By fire, Cap'n!" the Sheriff said, "dunno 's ever I can tell ye jest when she was! Can't say 's ever I took notice, now that 's a fact."

"Cal'late she was afore ever the Bible was wrote, do ye?" continued Cap'n Roundturn, with an air of cross-examination.

"I would n't un'take to say nothin' in regards to that, neither, Cap'n," replied the Sheriff.

"Wal, wal, you!" Cap'n Roundturn persisted, "what I 'm tryin' to come at, will ye say was she A. M. or was she P. M.? Come! Out with sunthin' or 'nother, ef 't ain't so bright, as the ole feller says!"

"Oh, wal, there!" said Sheriff Windseye, with an uneasy laugh. "You got me now in good

shape, Cap'n! I can't give ye no p'ints about that. All in God's world ever I know is, the book give it the fust cent'ry was the time this 'ere duel was fit. Some feller by the name o' Bird, or some sich a name anyways; he was into it, and seems 's though the other feller they called, — wal, no matter, — it 's gone from me that quick, but they was the real stuff, the pair on 'em. I cal'late a man 's full better off in the long run, though, to jest take and leave alone o' them set-fired books outright. Prob'ly the heft o' what you git into 'em is nothin' only ole women's gossip-talk, and like enough the rest-part ain't much better. It give me the headache last night after I come to turn in, same 's ef I'd had to set down and write off a letter! There 's a dinged sight too much bookin' of it at this day o' the world, anyways you can fix it, 'cording to my way o' thinkin'!"

"A set-fired sight less bookin' of it, and consid'ble more hoss-sense is jest what the world is fairly achin' for now'days!" piped Asa Fairway in his shrill falsetto.

"Ain't that what I allus claimed?" said the Sheriff. "But there, you! This thing ain't goin' to last. Books makes out to be consid'ble of a fad, like, jest now, but you see ef there don't come a time when folks will be glad to take and heave 'em

every one to hell overboard! That 's jest the predicament I 'm makin', and resk it!"

"I will go to work and tell you, gen'lemen, the way I look at all them kind o' things," said Cap'n Roundturn, suddenly rising and thrusting both hands deep in his trousers pockets, as he faced the assemblage squarely.

"The way I look at them things is this way. I believe we folks are gittin' jest about as fur advanced as ever we 'll be allowed to git. You take and let folks set to work and git too dod-blowed much learnin' into 'em, — take and leave 'em git along jest about so and so fur, we 'll say, and this here overrulin' power is allus and forever bound to step right in at this p'int and say to 'em plain and fair: —

"'Look a' here now, you folks, you! Turn to and stop up right short off jest where ye be! Don't none on ye darst to make another blame' hitch on no account! You folks is all gittin' to be a sight too knowin' altogether, you be, and fust thing ever we know, there won't be no puttin' up 'long on you at all! Take an' let her come to, this very secont,' says this here overrulin' power, 'for blamed ef ever I 'll stand no more sich works!'

"That 's jest eggsac'ly how things has allus made out to come around, and I tell ye it 's bound to

come round that same way ag'in! And mind ye, 't ain't only a short spell after this here, afore folks commences going astern ag'in in good shape, — back'ards and back'ards they goes, till fust thing ever you know, they ain't a mite better 'n so many dod-blowed cannibals, jest same 's they was in the fust send-off!"

"Jerusalum, you! — Ef I must say so!" exclaimed Skipper Job Gaskett. "Looks to me, it doos, as though there was a consid'ble stack o' folks round here had a tol'ble good chance ahead on 'em yit, afore ever they 're anyways liable to git this 'ere stern-way on to 'em, same 's you tell about, Cap'n Zene! Seems 's though I could turn to and pick ye out quite a few that don't need lose no great sight o' sleep yit awhile for fear they 're drawrin' nigh the tail-end of their rope!"

"Oh, there 's pore shoats everywheres, o' course," said Cap'n Roundturn, "but what I mean is, take folks by and large, like."

"Wal, I got my doubts jest the same," said Job. "I don't never cal'late myself we 're running no great resk o' trouble round here yit on account o' overmuch learnin', set-fire ef I do now!"

"Lemme jest take and tell ye a little mite of a short story," said Cap'n Roundturn by way of reply. "Here 's a little exper'unce I was knowin' to

myself one time. There was ole Cap'n Theedy Trunnel that used to go into the ole tops'l schooner Brilliant out o' Bayport yander when I fust knowed him. He had jest only one boy that he sot a master store by, and so fin'lly nothin' else in God's world would n't do without he should turn to and shove the young feller chock through one o' these here colleges or cem'teries, — I most forgit now which, — but college I think she was.

"Cap'n Theedy he wa'n't over and above well heeled in them days, ye know, and 't wa'n't no fool of a job for him to shove the youngster through same 's he done, but, Lord, he took and he skrimped a grain here, and a grain there; jammed almost chock into the wind's eye the pore ole feller was, for quite a few years, but fin'lly he made out to shove the boy clean through, and tickled enough he felt over it, too. I cal'late there wa'n't ever ary cat with two tails onto her ever felt tickleder 'n what ole Cap'n Theed done that time soon 's ever his boy come to git through all clip and clean, and come home fer good.

"He jest up and hustled him aboard the vessel right away, and give it her for Bangor hell-bent like; cal'latin' to load dimension-stuff for Baws'n, and never fool away no time neither, a-doin' of it, — cal'lated, he said, I know, on giving

the ole hooker an eight-foot deckload, and jest fairly makin' of her ache everyways a-luggin' lumber so 's to try and git a grain forehanded ag'in. The boy he was a big, strapping great moose of a feller, ye see, and the ole man 'lowed how with nigh onto a thousand dollars' wuth o' college learnin' into him, he 'd prob'ly jest turn to and make things fairly zip aboard the vessel, but, bedide you! the gist o' the whole bus'niss was, that there young six-foot galoot he never knowed enough to take and stow so much 's a hemlock board into that schooner's hold; that is, not the way she ought to be stowed, ye un'stand; and pore ole sir he was all tore out about it, and no mistake! Seems 's though take it jest the fust on 't, and he could n't appear to take in the full heft o' the thing noways, 't was sich a reg'lar socker of a clip like, but now soon 's ever he did kind o' come to hisself so 's to realize it all in real good shape, I want you should un'stand there was some proper loud saying over [1] to that young cub o' his'n!"

"Don't see as the boy was to blame a mite more 'n what the ole man was!" said Job Gaskett.

"No more he was, you!" Cap'n Roundturn said, "but all the same he come in for a tormented ole

[1] "Saying over" — to berate.

rakin' down that time. Cap'n Theedy he turned to and called him most everything he could lay tongue to, and fin'ly up and driv him ashore onto the dock; would n't have him aboard the vessel noways, and that same evening I rec'lect he come aboard o' me, — we was layin' nigh alongside on him, — he come aboard o' me, and says, s' he: 'Cap'n Roundturn,' s' he, 'ef I was to have a hunnerd and one boys, never a dod-blasted one on 'em should n't set foot in one o' them hell-fired colleges!'

"That 's jest how ole Cap'n Trunnel come to look at them things for all the rest-part o' *his* life. As fur 's the boy was concerned, the last ever I knowed of him, he was to work wheeling bricks into one o' them brickyards over Bayport ways there."

"Wal, there! don't that settle it!" piped Asa Fairway. "What else would ever you supposen he was like to come to, anyways?"

Job Gaskett, however, stuck to his text in spite of the decided expressions of approval elicited by Cap'n Roundturn's striking story.

"That 's all well and good," said he, "but 't ain't saying colleges is liable to do no great hurt round here at this day o' the world. Now, Cap'n Roundturn, bein' as you 've run the schools into this deestrict ever sence I was the bigness of a trawl-kag,

most, I kind o' want you should jest answer me one thing."

"Wal, then, fire away, and don't make no more bones about it!" said the old man, rather testily. "I'll ventur' to say I can answer ary question you can ask of me, or any number on 'em, for that matter."

"Prob'ly you can, Cap'n," Job said. "I won't deny but what you 're extry well posted; not a mite I won't; but what I want to git at is this 'ere. How can ever you account for it there 's sich a set-fired troop o' folks round here that can't neither read nor write a blame' word ef they was to swing for it? There 's lots" —

"Take and stop short right jest where you be, you!" broke in Cap'n Roundturn. "I'll jest overhaul one o' your statemints to a time, ef you got no objections, and in the fust place will jest merely inquire of ye this much, — is there any more o' them kind of folks here to this Cove 'n what there is livin' to Kunkett Village, or to Herring Harbor, or to the Lower Neck, you?"

"I won't say as there is, Cap'n," replied Job. "Allst ever I do know, plaguey well, is there 's dezens and dezens on 'em here to this Cove that never would once know their own names ef they see 'em writ on a barn door in big overgrowed let-

ters five foot high! Now you know that 'ere jest as well 's ever I do, Cap'n, and, by fire! there 's a sight more growing up now'days that ain't a whit better off 'n they be! 'T ain't no good backin' and fillin' about that, not a mite!"

"Wal, sir," said Cap'n Roundturn, realizing that further evasion was useless, "I will give in to ye that consid'ble few of our folks to this Cove ain't got no great sight o' learnin' into 'em, and the reason ain't noways fur to seek, neither. When I fust come to take holt o' running the schools here to this Cove, there was only jest three months in the year that the young fry could tend out on schoolin' at all. In them days, fifty odd year sence, the heft o' the boys allus struck out going fishin' or else coastin' early in the spring o' the year, so 's the winter term was all ever they 'd git round to. The heft on 'em would gin'ally tend out on that there consid'ble reg'lar, but ye see take it next summer they 'd allus turn to and forgit most all ever they 'd learnt afore, and have to make a new beginning like, all over fresh ag'in, so 't was jest like giving of 'em the laborin' oar the whole blame' time, an' 't wa'n't strange ef some on 'em made a master long-winded job gitting their learnin'."

"You 're right, they done so, Cap'n!" put in Job. "Why, you! Take it the time I was tend-

ing the ole school there to Number Four, and by fire! I know there was big, hulkin' chaps much as thirty year old there winters, and jest the very minute one on 'em would git so 's he could take and figger up a trip o' fish, he 'd quit schoolin' of it for good!"

"Wal," continued the old man, "that 's the reason them kind ain't no better posted 'n what they be now, but, godfrey mighty, you come to take it this day o' the world, and it 's a cat of another color altogether. We ain't got scursely a vessel left to take the youngsters away from schools summer times, and our schools, ef I do say it, is full better 'n what they was them days. Ef a boy turns to and grows up here to this Cove now'days, with all the advantages that 's fairly hove at him, you may say, and then atop o' that can't neither read nor cipher, it stands to reason him or his folks must be ter'ble lackin'!"

"Yas, any one would nach'ally think it, Cap'n," Job said, "but whatever 's the reason on 't, seems 's though there 's an oncommon big raft on 'em in this deestrict now'days, appears to have all the time there is made a-hanging on their hands allus, and still they dunno nothin', and don't want to the fust damn mite, neither! Why, Cap'n What's-his-name over to the Neck Life Saving Station there,

he was telling of me only t' other day how there was quite a few into his crew o' picked men this winter that could n't read one doggone word to save 'em from hell-fire! He says to me how he 'd offered time and ag'in to take a couple of hours every night and try to learn 'em a grain o' suppn', but there wa'n't ary soul on 'em appeared to give a rap one ways or t' other, and nary one would n't take holt."

"That may be gospil-truth, too," said Cap'n Roundturn, "but you want to rec'lect they 're every one on 'em Herrin' Harborites into that there crew this winter, and there ain't no call to go heaving their failin's onto our folks, as I see."

"No, I never cal'late to," Job said. "We got all we can stivver to in any kind o' shape a'ready, accordin' to my figgering. Now jest you take all them Grommetses down backside o' the Neck, there, and blame' ef I believe there 's ary one outen the whole tribe ever yit see the inside of a school-book, and there 's more like 'em consid'ble nigher home, too. It allus seems 's though there 'd ought to be some kind o' law to tech them folks, so 's to make 'em come to time, like."

"Guess you 'd have to set to work and frame a brand spangin' new cord o' law ever to tech them Grommetses," remarked Asa Fairway, "and I cal'-

late she 'd have to be club law at that! Speaking o' them folks, somebody was saying t' other day that Pete Abe Grommet had went and got married."

"Got married! What for gracious' sake 's he got to git married on, you?" asked Skipper Job.

"That 's the very thing come into my head quick 's ever I heered tell the yarn," said Asa, "but seems 's though young Pete Abe is fairly well fixed, after all. He 's been kind o' shinin' up to one of ole Hammer-hawk Grommetses gals for some little time now, but it appears the gal she sort o' kep' setting back like, till Pete Abe he jest up and says to her right plain, s' he, 'You want to take and brace up, you do,' s' he. 'I got half a dezen bully good hens,' s' he, 'and thirty odd dollars into the bank, by fire! and,' s' he, 'I ruther guess you 'll be apt to find them things don't make out to grow on every bush!'"

"Good for Pete Abe! Complete!" laughed Job again. "That fetched her to her mutton some quick, I don't misdoubt! I never realized ever we had no sich millionist stoppin' up into that section. Puts me in mind o' the time ole Rube William Clueline down there got married, and stole three chickens off'n his woman's folks right off, to pay Squire Kentle for splicin' of 'em up! 'Lowed how

ef ever her folks yipped one word in regards to it, he 'd turn to and git disvosed that minute!"

"Them folks don't stand for no marriage nor disvose, ary one, as a gin'ral rule," said Asa. "They 're a lot o' curios, the heft on 'em up that way is. You 've heern tell how ole Hammer-hawk cut hisself in the woods last winter, hain't ye never? The ole feller come down the road here, and bought hisself a pair o' these 'ere red stockin's, — never see none afore, ye know, and I guess it 's a chance ef ever he had on ary pair o' stockin's afore, anyways; but this time he got into a pair o' them bright red ones, and then, after dinner, down he goes into the swamp a-cutting hackmatacks. Bimeby, someways his axe fetched a sheer, and cuts consid'ble of a big gash right into his boot-leg. The ole feller he stoops down to git a look at it, ketches sight o' the red stockin' inside on her, and down he flops head over kittle into the snow, yellin' bloody murder! Joel Kentle, I b'lieve it was, he was to work clean down in there, somewheres, — nigh half a mile off, they said, — he heerd this set-fired shindy, and come rushing up along, hell-bent for election, cal'latin' for sure somebody was like to be massacreed, but, lord gull! he could n't never do the fust thing along of ole Hammer-hawk! The creetur 'll weigh hard onto three hunnerd, ye know,

and he was jest fairly crazy-wild, 'lowing how he 'd cut his leg chock off, clip and clean!

"He would n't stand up, nor yit set up, nary one, but jest laid there and rolled and thrashed for all the world same 's a tormented ole blackfish that 's grounded hisself in shoal water! Fin'ly, Joel he had to frog it clean down to the ole man's place there, and roust out a gang on 'em to go up and skid the creetur' home on a hand-sled, with him a-fetchin' them ongodly snorts and howls fast 's ever he could draw breath!

"They cal'lated for sure he 'd cut off an arter', anyways, but Joel Kentle he says, come to git him flipped out on the longe to home there, and they never found so much as a scratch onto his dinged ole karkis! I cal'late they all turned to and give him the very Jesse about that time, and not to blame, neither."

Then followed a further discussion of the numerous Grommets' peculiarities, from which it appeared that young Peter Abram, in getting regularly married, had distinctly violated a family tradition, which had long held such ceremony as entirely useless; as entailing uncalled for expense, and tending to attract public attention to one's private affairs most unnecessarily.

"Yas sir-ee, sir," resumed Skipper Job Gaskett,

"them Grommetses allus was a dretful ignorant class o' curios, and I s'pose allus will be, but I want you should un'stand you hain't need to travel very fur to find some master queer citizens down on the ole Kunkett ro'd there. It 's tol'ble safe to bate there ain't a one amongst the kit ever see the inside of no book, and the set-fired gibberidge them folks gits off is wuss 'n what hog-latin ever dared to be, I cal'late. You come to take a feller anyways fresh from the 'States' down amongst them clammers, and it 's going to puzzle him most damn'ly at fust to git onto jest what they 're tryin' to come at."

"By fire, you!" Asa Fairway exclaimed, "that 's a fact, too! Nothing only jest one continooal chow, chow, chow; same 's a bloody outlandishman of a Scotch feller I had aboard o' me for mate one time. But you take the oleseed grandsir of 'em all there; ole 'Humdurgan Jacky' they call him, and I 'm knowin' to it his woman can turn to and write off a letter good 's ever I could myself. Guess likely she 's all the one down there can do the trick, but I know summer times she keeps them young uns on the stiddy leap the heft o' the time luggin' these 'ere begging letters round amongst the rusticators there to ole Kunkett Harbor. 'T wa'n't only about Christmas-

time my woman, she got a one herself, she did; wrote off onto a piece of birch bark, in room o' no paper. One o' the small fry fetched her up to the house, and she was worded kind of so-fash: 'We air so pore this winter can you send us two quarts o' beans three pounds o' sugar four pounds o' pork do not refuse P. S. Have you got a good singin' canary bird to sell cheap?'"

"Sho, you! Pooty good, too!" laughed Cap'n Job. "Begged her vittles, but same time had the cold cash to put into a bang-up good canary, ef only she could git holt of a one anyways reasonable like! Set-fire ef she don't make out to be what I call a proper cooler of an ole genii, that creetur' is! But then they 're every soul on 'em dead gone and fairly carried away over them canary birds down there. You 'll find a one, and like 's not half a dezen to every ole wrack of a house all down through there, a-screechin' away fit to stund ye! Ef them folks cal'lates to deliver their own mail so-fashion, though, Cap'n Windseye, seems 's ef you hain't no need to fore-lay on no great sale of postage-stamps amongst 'em, allowing you do gaft onto the post-office this spring!"

"Dunno 's I have," coldly returned Sheriff Windseye, who had always relied largely upon

the "Kunkett Roaders" and "Lower Neckers" for support in his various political aspirations. "You 'll find them folks has got any God's quantity o' hoss-sense, though, now you better believe, and gimme that in mine in room of dod-blowed book-learnin', every time!"

"Me too, come to that!" chimed in Asa Fairway.

III

THE DAYSPRING BREEZE

WITH the approach of stormy weather in the fall, old residents of Killick Cove always grew more and more reminiscent of maritime disasters in former years. Even before the summer was fairly over, Cap'n Simeon Roundturn in particular regularly began cocking his eye skyward in anticipation of an "August breeze," and recounting the havoc wrought by such untimely visitors within his remembrance. It was on a cloudy, blustering night well towards the end of November, when he, after referring to certain records dimly penciled upon the inside of his high desk in the store, drew the company's attention to the fact that just fifteen years previous had occurred the memorable "Hattie Gaskett breeze."

"That 'ere made out to be a master-spiteful brush o' wind," said he. "It 's seldom ever I see more heft to the wind than what there was take it a-nigh high-water slack that night. Set-fire, you! but wa'n't that ole sled just jumping into it

endways for God's sakes, though, jest afore she parted! It 's some lucky them s'utheasters is most gin'ally so short-lived, for I cal'late you take an' let one o' them reg'lar-built, ole-style rip-tearers hang on same 's a no'theaster often doos, and she 'd have all hell out by the roots afore ever she let go!"

"Guess likely 't would be a case of stand from under, for all hands and the cook!" assented Skipper Job Gaskett. "But come to talk about heavy breezes, why we ain't had a one of no account this fall so fur; and I kind of look for a proper ole combustible, soon 's ever they do git everything all fixed good and ready like."

"*Ain't* she held some mod'rate this fur, you?" said Simeon. "Declare I never see the beat for holdin' mod'rate. She 'll turn to and herm up all of a smudge to loo'ard jes' though we was in for a brush sure, and same time we don't git a one noways.

'Sunset clear of a Sunday night,
She 'll storm afore a Monday night,'—

as the ole feller says. Here there 's been a lee-set herming up stiddy sence noontime to-day, but I 'll bate ye a good polluck she 's all fairin' away ag'in by this time, fine 's a fiddle!"

So saying, Simeon left his desk, and picked his

way among boxes and barrels to a rear window overlooking the harbor.

"D' ye mind how them Frenchmen to Miquelon allus and forever was watchin' out for a lee-set?" asked Cap'n Zenas Roundturn. "How blame' sudden they 'd p'int them great shollops o' theirn for the solid turf, quick 's ever she commenced to herm up anyways thick to loo'ard!"

"I know they would so," said Job Gaskett. "Nothin' like a good lee-set to take down them feller's tails! What 's she doing of out there now?" he called to Simeon at the window.

"Wall, I dunno, you," replied Simeon, rather dubiously. "'T ain't none too slick lookin' overhead, that 's a fact. The moon, she 's wallering through a mess of krawm, and looks to me kind o' sick and tired of the job, too. Puts me in mind of the last run o' shad, that moon doos by the look on her! Hello, here 's a vessel jest coming to away up in the cove abreast o' the schoolhouse. She 's sparred a sight like Seth Fairway, nigh 's ever I can tell. Look a' here, Job; you 're one of his owners; don't you call that vessel Seth?"

Job Gaskett, thus appealed to, also went to the window, and shading his eyes, gazed intently out.

"I call that the ole Dayspring fast enough," he said presently. "She 's all legs and arms any-

ways, and that 's the berth Seth has picked to anchor in lately. He 'll lay aground there by half-tide, you see, and cal'lates on squshin' enough of that soft mud into the ole creetur's seams so 's to give 'em a little grain of let-up at the pumps. She sweats a good five hunnerd clips an hour now'days, the best they can do. Oh yas, that 's her all right! Listen to the ole pump going a'ready! Ker-chink, ker-chunk! Hear her? That 's the last thing afore turning in, and the fust thing come to turn out, aboard the ole Dayspring!"

"Why in the name o' common sense don't you folks turn to and condemn the tormented ole basket?" exclaimed Sheriff Windseye. "I call it jest merely heavin' away money to keep sich craft running. I 'll warrant she ain't squared her bills yit this season, though, for that matter, the best payin' hooker ever went out of this cove would n't pay no great sight, not with Seth Fairway master. He 's all gone by complete, that feller has, and ain't been no real account since the Hattie Gaskett breeze. I 'd took and hove him out of her long ago, ef 't been any truck o' mine!"

"Guess nobody won't dispute that!" muttered Job, taking advantage of the Sheriff's deafness. "Wal, Cap'n Windseye," he continued in a louder voice, "I know plaguey well 't ain't the fust part

of business for us to keep Seth into the vess'l, or to keep her going at all, fur 's that 's concerned. She 's made us a dead loss every trip for three year now, reg'lar 's clock work, but be jiggered ef I know jest what to do about it."

"Do?" cried the Sheriff. "Take and bounce him! Heave him ashore where he b'longs, and junk the vess'l ef she 's wuth it, which I misdoubt ef she is!"

"No, sir!" said Job decidedly. "There 'll be no sich works not yit awhile. You take Seth Fairway, and to my thinkin' he 's one o' the honestest and one o' the smartest men ever was raised to this cove, but he 's made out to have the wust run of bad luck of ary pore devil ever I knowed, bar nobody! There never was ary skipper out of here could hold a candle to him on nav'gation, and everybody knows time and ag'in he 's been nuss on board o' cap'ns that won't scursely notice him sence they 've growed to be big herbs, and quit going."

"That 's God's own truth, too!" put in Simeon Roundturn. "He 's been nuss acrost the Western Ocean a dezen times to my knowin'! Smart 's a trap, Seth allus was, and how in blazes he never had the knack of clawing to wind'ard none for hisself, allus 'peared ter'ble sing'lar to me."

"I dunno 's it 's so sing'lar, neither," returned

Job Gaskett. "Look at what he 's had to buck against to home there! Jest take and look at the luck o' the man! Blow my shirt ef I cal'late Cap'n Windseye's mortgage here would cover his doctor's bills! He 's dreened dry 's a puff-ball now, anyways, without it 's his sheer in the ole Dayspring, and that 's wuss 'n nothin'. The ole home-place up there of course he doos rent, but it don't fetch no great, and 's all eat up with the mortgage. Seth he 's allus been to sea, ye know, ever sence there was any bigness to him, and don't know a thing in God's world without it 's aboard a vess'l. What show would he stand ashore here, all crippled up same 's he is now? I tell ye Seth 's a sick man, and liable to git through most any time. He ain't knowed a well day not sence the Hattie Gaskett wrack."

"That 's what I say!" said the Sheriff. "They tell me by spells he ain't so 's to so much as stand his trick to the wheel, and still he 's all the one aboard can run a compass course. Why, jest only look at what he 's got for a crew aboard there this fall — ole Jake Grommet, that he took off'n the Town Farm for his keep, and that long-legged galoot of Si Kentles's there — dunno his elbow from a hole in the ground. For king's sake what 's he cal'late to do; 'lowing she shets in thick o' fog

on him, and breezens up fresh so 's he 's got to up hellum and run her? Got her insured on chock to the handle I hope, ain't ye?" added the genial Sheriff, with a sidelong wink and leer at the others.

"My piece ain't insured on a red cent's wuth," replied Job, "and it 's safe to bate Seth's nor them two Tenney gals' pieces ain't neither, ary one on 'em. Same time, us owners would been full better off ef he 'd cast the vessel away any day in the last half dezen years."

"Don't misdoubt it a mite," said Cap'n Zenas Roundturn. "I un'stood though, them two Kunkett P'int Grommetses was 'long o' Seth this season."

"So they was 'long on him a spell," said Job, "but quick 's ever the weather commenced to git a grain ketchy this fall, they yanked their dunnage out in a hurry, and shipped to go polluckin' out of Gloshter. Seth can't never keep no decent sailorman aboard that creetur' — she 's all wore out, same 's he is. He can jest barely make his livin' going skipper, and that 's all the way in God's world ever he can make his livin', too. Soon 's ever the ole Dayspring stops going, Seth Fairway he stops going; there 's the whole story in a nutshell, and nobody knows it half so well as what he

doos. I call it consid'ble tough, come to look right at it, for in the fust place, you take Seth, and he never would been in the shape he is now ef he had n't turned to and punished hisself so like the mischeef the time the Hattie Gaskett come ashore. I dunno myself as there was ary call for him in pertikler to up and take sich chances trying to resicue them folks that night any more 'n the rest-part on 'em that was down to the wrack, but seems 's though he was all the one in the crowd had the sand to try it on that time. I cal'late that 'ere scrape took it out o' Seth's hide a good twenty years' wuth, anyways."

"Consid'ble pore judgmint, that was," remarked Sheriff Windseye, contemplating a double row of inky nails with seeming satisfaction. "I allus called sich works showin' off more courage 'n conduct, myself."

"Turn to and call 'em what you damn please, Cap'n!" cried Job Gaskett hotly, "but godfrey mighty, you! I sh'd sooner have that 'ere scrape sot down to my account good and plain 'n to hold every dod-blasted mortgage you 've got betwixt here and the Kunkett line!"

Sheriff Windseye spat copiously at the stove, and shifted somewhat uneasily in his chair.

"I ain't no professor, same 's you be, Cap'n

Windseye," continued Job, "and like enough I ain't so carried away and all feather-white over sich works as what I 'd ought to be, we 'll say, but I tell ye I don't begredge the little I 'm able to put out by way o' keeping Seth Fairway's head a grain above water. Set-fire, you, ain't it hard lines enough for a sickly ole feller same 's him having to go outside here late in the fall o' the year and pitch-pole around into a punky ole ark that 's liable to slide from un'neath of him any minute, and nary soul else aboard without it 's another crippled-up ole has-been, and a pore half fool? Plague on it all, I 'd make him a home there to my house in no time, only he won't never hearken to it, and allus allows how he 's going to git a fresh holt bimeby."

"Takes desp'rit olé chances into that vess'l, Seth doos, and no mistake," remarked Simeon. "But it must come some consid'ble hard on them Tenney gals though, this here drawrin' their wallets stiddy, in room of ever ketchin' a dollar. The ole sir did n't leave them two gals none too well heeled."

"Wall, *'t is* master hard on them two, as you say," declared Skipper Job. "O' course the time the ole sir stepped out, he cal'lated that half o' the Dayspring would take care of the gals in tol'ble

good shape, and so it would ef only we was gitting our little three fifty anywheres to the norrard of the Cape, same 's them days, but bedide now, come to take it this day o' the world, and the more you got in them small coasters, the wuss off you be! Them two ole women is chock full of grit, though, and seems 's ef they sot a store by Seth, someways or 'nother. I 've wondered afore now was ever there anything betwixt him and ary one o' them two gals?"

"Why there, you!" replied Simeon, leaving his desk. "Did n't we use to hear tell about his going along o' that oldest one, the time the ice sunk the ole Good Intent out here in the Cove? They 'lowed 't was that kept him from hitchin' up them days. You forgot all that so quick, Job?"

"Never heerd the fust yip o' no sich talk!" answered Skipper Gaskett. "It 's seldom ever I was to home them times, ye know. I would n't wonder a mite ef 't was that way, though, and I 'll tell ye jest for why, too. This last summer that ever was, when Seth had them Grommetses along on him, he had to take and lay the vessel up to the town w'arft for a spell so 's them two could go home and git their hay. One morning he wanted I should come down to see how bad the fores'l was tore, and swan ef ever I 'll forgit the lines he 'd

went to work and run to make sure and hold that schooner. There was eleven springs and six breast-lines by actil count, besides a bight of the cable round that big ellum in the foot o' the field.

"'Godfrey mighty, Seth,' s' I. 'You don't cal'late for her to strike adrift on ye in a hurry, do ye now?' s' I.

"'No,' s' he. 'Not ef I can raise gear enough to hold her. That creetur,' s' he, 'is every mite that stands betwixt me and the pore farm, and I don't want she should git through 'fore I do!' s' he.

"That 's how he 's allus and forever talking — hopin' he 'll make out to git through 'fore ever the Dayspring doos. Seems 's though the fust night after they fetched her in to the w'arft, he up and dremp she parted a spring, so out he turned, all thick o' rain and blowy it was, and managed someways to take a turn o' the chain round the big ellum, though how under the canopy he done it all soul alone, I dunno. After that, he 'lowed he turned out reg'lar every night soon 's ever she floated, and walked the deck till she grounded ag'in solid. Jest fairly skeered blue all the time he was, for fear she 'd list off, and git strained or disenabled someways so 's 't we 'd have to give her up. She 's growing nigh as ancient as the north

star, the ole Dayspring is, and 't would n't take but ter'ble little to cook her goose, I tell ye. Gov'-mint has lost record on how ole she is, but Seth and me has held our pieces into her risin' o' thirty year, and Miss Jude Tenney there she 'lows she can't rec'lect the time the ole sir did n't hold his half on her. 'Cordin' to that, it 's sixty odd year she 's been going, and it 's a good twenty since she 's had any great sight of repairin' up. O' course we have to keep laying out on her stiddy jest to keep her alive at all, and take it the last few years she 's gone astern upwards o' four hunnerd dollars."

Here a contemptuous snort from red-faced Sheriff Windseye further expressed his opinion of such weakness.

"Now take it this summer," continued Job. "Seth he 's been to work on them ole sails for years, but come to look at the fores'l, I see to once she was past all fixin' up this time, and Seth he was ter'ble down in the mouth over it. After dinner I turned to and frogged it right over to the Tenney gals' place there, to see ef they was willing to stand another fores'l. 'Prob'ly,' 's I, 'we might find a second hand sail to Portland that would do, in room o' having a one built brand-new.' But then I up and told 'em right out plain and

fair jest how the thing was; that they did n't need ever expect to see their money back, for lumber freights was a mere nothin', and scurse at that, and the vess'l was so pore now we dassent let her lug nothin' else without it *was* lumber.

"Wall, sir, them two women never spent no time backing and filling over the thing, not a bit on 't. Miss Jude, that 's the oldest one, she jest up and says right off spango, 'Cap'n Gaskett,' says she, 'Ef I ain't mistakened, I 've heern my father say as long 's he had a good stout fores'l to his schooner, he felt tol'ble easy, like.'

"'Yas, marm,' s' I. 'That 's eggsac'ly how I allus figgered it myself. Take and gimme a fores'l I can swear by, and I 'll make shift to git *somewheres*, 'lowing all the rest-part o' the sails blows to kingdom come!'

"'Cap'n Gaskett,' says she ag'in, dretful earnest like, 'air all them other sails as pore as what you tell me that fores'l is?' Poked it right to me, she did, ye see.

"'Wall marm,' s' I, 'the best on 'em ain't none too good, that 's a fact; still,' s' I, 'they ain't all to ribbins same 's the fores'l is.' Might told her they was every one on 'em only fit for junk long since, but then thinks I, what 's the good nervin' of her up so fashion?

"'Wall then,' says she, 'Cap'n Fairway must cert'nly have a good new fores'l, the least ever we can do, but oh, says she, I wisht we was able to repair him up so 's he 'd stand a better chance!'

"Then she turned to and asked me a raft o' questions about things, — wanted to know did I call it anyways resky going into the Dayspring, and ef Seth made out to live comfortable going into her, and did I think he was failin', and so forth and so on. O' course I done my dingdest to put a good face on it all, but I know when I come to tell 'em about his running them twenty odd lines there to the town w'arft, and walkin' the deck by nights all soul alone, he was that skeered o' the vess'l 's gitting into trouble, why the two on 'em took on some consid'ble, and Miss Jude she fin'lly up and cleared out for a spell. I never give it no great thought to the time, but mebbe now I commence to git the loom o' the land a grain. One thing I did take pertikler notice on though, and that was jest this here: 't wa'n't but a short spell after that new fores'l was bent aboard the Dayspring afore one day I see the Tenney gals' brindle cow going down the ro'd past my house in tow o' ole man Kentleses butcher cart."

As was now necessary after each trip, at high

water next day the old schooner was warped in to the town wharf and placed where the ebb tide would leave her dry for the never-ending round of patching and calking.

Throughout the cold gray day the white beard and bent figure of Seth Fairway was seen puttering about under her barnacle-coated hull, plugging wormholes, driving shingles into seams and butts that defied calking, and chinsing bits of oakum around decayed treenails with his knife. Yet in spite of incessant labor on hull and rigging, it was but too evident that Captain Seth Fairway was steadily being worsted in his long fight against decay.

Water constantly dripped in a dozen places from the yawning seams of the old vessel's bottom, and oakum bleached by age everywhere started from the weatherworn and rust-streaked planking. From stem to stern numberless makeshift repairs, with mildewed sails patched and re-patched by canvas scarcely less mildewed, told the pitiful story of Seth Fairway's desperate struggle.

Toward night the light westerly wind went down entirely, and in the utter calm ensuing, a dull rote of the sea on the eastern board first became noticeable, broken only by the shrill cries of gulls endlessly circling over the flats at the head of the Cove.

Soon the boy started for his home to pass the night, taking with him old man Grommet, who, however, was expected to return on board later.

Just at sunset the curtain of dense leaden cloud lifted slightly in the southwest, disclosing for a few moments a narrow strip of metallic sky, against which the dark mass of spruce woods behind the town stood out in sombre relief.

Then suddenly, for an instant, a flood of lurid sunlight illumined the battered hull and every spar and line of cordage on the old Dayspring with a strange brassy brilliancy, and as this brief pageant faded away, the white lighthouse on the Neck flashed its first pale ray against a dark lowering sky, losing itself in a murky horizon.

Tired out by his long day's work, Seth Fairway took a last careful look at the numerous fasts holding his vessel to the town wharf, and then left on a long tramp for home, where he had agreed to remain over night as a matter of convenience to his tenants.

An hour or so later, Skipper Job Gaskett lighted his pipe after supper, and started for his regular evening visit to Simeon's store.

Up across the dark stretches of fog-haunted marshes at the eastward sounded louder the sullen rumble of the rote. The air seemed to have taken

on an additional chill, and turning up his collar, Cap'n Job hastened along the uneven road, when a bleak, salt breeze from the sea blew lightly in his face, and soughed among the giant elms on either side. He stopped abruptly, held up a moistened finger for a moment, and muttered, "S'utheast." Two or three dry leaves fluttered slantingly to the ground, and rustled softly past him in the frozen wheel ruts. Soon a flake of snow struck his cheek, a more decided puff of cutting wind swept a rush of leaves along the road, and as he at length neared the store, its lights streamed out upon a driving snowstorm, while the strident blasts of the steam horn at the Neck came booming inland on the fast increasing gusts.

"We 're going to have a brush out of this, and resk it, you!" declared Job, beating his hat against the counter inside. "It 's thick o' snow a'ready, and breezening on stiddy from out here to the s'utheast."

"I would n't wonder ef we did n't git consid'ble of a stir-up out of this here," agreed Simeon. "Last night the Neck Light reached clean acrost the water chock into my bedroom winder, and she hain't done it afore to my knowing not sence the time of the Sea Flower breeze and the big tide. Them gulls, too, has been bunchin' in the Cove here

for a gale o' wind all day, and you take that 'ere glinn to-night; ef that wa'n't a proper forerunner, then I 'm a tormented farmer!

'Git a sea-glinn,
Ketch a wet skin!'" —

repeated he oracularly. "That 's what the ole folks allus use to say when I fust commenced going. I called her a weeked lookin' glinn we had at sundown, and liable to git in consid'ble work, 'cordin' to the way this here 's prickin' on now! Takin' right holt for keeps, this here acts to me like!"

Before nine o'clock Simeon was obliged to ask for help in closing his shutters for the night, and when, soon after, he and Job Gaskett fought their way home, it was through several inches of wet snow, and in the teeth of a blinding, choking gale which drowned all other sounds in its roaring among the writhing trees, and was already strewing the road with their branches.

All night until just after high water at daybreak it stormed with ever increasing fury, razing fences and trees, and plastering the trembling houses of the Cove thickly with snow, only to wash them down again in overwhelming squalls of rain and sleet.

In the cold, wan light of the early morning Skipper Job Gaskett stood in his doorway with an ancient canvas-covered spy-glass, and strained his eyes in ascertaining that no vessel had come ashore on the surf-fringed coast near the harbor's entrance, or in the outlying expanse of tumbling breakers. But lying a short distance inside the Neck Light was a totally disabled coaster pitching wildly at both straining cables just clear of the red spindle on the Fiddler's Pup ledge. Her yawl boat had washed from the stern davits; men worked constantly at the pumps, and in the main rigging fluttered a tattered signal of distress.

Of the fleet of small fishing boats usually moored in the Cove, more than half lay driven high on the shore to leeward, with great windrows of sea-drift and spume, and lobster traps entangled in their own broken warps.

After the manner of southeasters, the gale had reached its climax at high water, and was fast subsiding, but the rote's thunderous monotone seemed momentarily to increase in volume as the wind went down, and the air was redolent of kelp, and heavy with a salt, sea smell.

Job Gaskett turned back into his house, and as he did so, noticed that no masts were visible above the dark fringe of trees on the shore near the town

wharf. Hastily donning coat and hat, in half a foot of sloppy snow he splashed down the yet untraveled road to a point where it was joined by another leading directly to the water.

Down this road were still to be traced a pair of straggling footprints, which Skipper Job eagerly followed with fast increasing forebodings. The town wharf was unoccupied, but lying diagonally across the ledgy shore close by was the twisted hull of the old Dayspring, both masts criss-cross on deck in a snarl of rigging, and her back broken over a sharp ridge of rock, yet still made fast by the rusty cable from her bow around the great elm in the foot of the field.

From the cap-log of the sagging wharf dangled the frayed ends of the parted lines, one of which Job recognized by the blocks attached as the vessel's main sheet. Close to this, amidst a multitude of intermingling foot-prints in the snow, lay a broken lantern, bearing out the sad tale of a last futile attempt at securing the vessel.

Captain Seth Fairway's wish had been realized.

As the tide ebbed away, they found him resting his grizzled head on a brown pillow of kelp close under the stern of his old schooner.

IV

SUPERSTITIONS OF THE COVE

After several days of strong easterly wind, with rain and sleet, it had fallen nearly calm, and a dense, dripping fog settled over Killick Cove, as night came on early with dungeon-like blackness. Across the rain-soaked pastures sounded loudly the hollow rote of the sea, broken only by the foghorn's sepulchral note and the mournful clang of the bell-buoy on the Hue and Cry.

Clad in oilskins and rubber boots, certain faithful pilgrims to the store who had wallowed up through the mud and darkness from the Neck, reported it as "breaking a clear torch" on every ledge outside, and bewailed the probable fate of lobster-traps and trawls.

Surely a more fitting night on which to consider witchcraft, forerunners, and like subjects could not have been chosen, and Skipper Job Gaskett's black eyes snapped excitedly as he once more declared his firm belief that witches still practiced their art in the vicinity, though possibly in a less open man-

ner than in the old days when Sarah Kentle and Hetty Moye "hove" their dreaded bridles at will, or in the much more recent times when Aunt Polly Futtock exacted tribute from mariners about to sail.

As a recent occurrence upholding him in his well-known belief, Skipper Job related the following singular experience of his wife: —

"My woman," said he, "she sot out one time last fall to drive 'way out back here a-visiting of her cousin to Lyndon Corners, there. 'T was some consid'ble time sence ever she 'd been over the road, you un'stand, and bimeby she come to a place where she kind o' got off'n her course altogether; she lost her reckonin' complete, you might say, and could n't see ary 'marks,' or git ary soundings, nary one o' the two.

"Wal, fin'lly she see a woman out watering her plants down by the gate in front of a little small ole red house there was, so she let the mare come to, like; passed the time of day along o' the woman, and asked would she tell her which was the right ways to take. Wal, this 'ere woman she made off as ef she was real polite and accommodatin' like, and went to work right away and pricked off a new course for my woman to run, plain as could be; but she kept up one stiddy clatter o' gossup-talk

same 's ef she had n't seen ary soul for a fortni't, and fin'lly nothin' would n't do but my woman should turn to and have a dish o' tea along on her, seein' how it was hard onto noon-time already.

"Wal, soon 's ever my woman come to leave, she followed her chock down to the gate ag'in, making off, ye know, to be awful anxious for fear it would storm afore sundown, and wanting my woman should borry a shawl, and an umbril, and I dunno what not. Oh, she done her little act right up in proper good shape, now I tell ye, but what I 'm coming at is jest this 'ere: when my woman took holt o' them reins to start along ag'in, be jiggered ef that mare could make out to raise huff off'n the ground, noways she could work it! My woman allows she done her very dingdest tryin' to git a move onto that hoss ag'in, but it never was a part'cle of use, and fin'lly it come acrost her all of a sudden jest what was to pay.

"She went to work and onhitched a big overgrowed shawl-pin she had onto her by good luck, and afore ever this 'ere set-fired ole fly-by-night of a creetur' knowed what she was up to, my woman reached right outen the wagon and fetched a good raking jab like with that big pin, nigh chock down the length o' the creetur's bare arm, so 's to set the blood a-squirtin' consid'ble lively, I tell ye, and jest

the very secont she done so, the mare started off down the road same 's a bullet outen a gun, and left that 'ere dinged ole witch a-hopping round there like mad, screechin' out fit to stund anybody. She 'd turned to and *teched* the mare in good shape, ye see; jest hove a spell clip and clean acrost the whole blame' business, and nothin' only blood would n't break it."

After some few remarks from Skipper Asa Fairway in commendation of Mrs. Gaskett's sagacity on this occasion, Simeon inquired from his perch behind the desk whether Job had heard anything from his oil-can recently, and as it proved there were several present unfamiliar with the facts in this strange case, Skipper Gaskett obligingly furnished them again as follows: —

" The time I turned to and painted up my house and outbuildings five year ago come spring, there was a four-gallon tin oil-can left kickin' about the yard, and fin'lly I took and hove her into the barn to be red on her. Wal, she laid up there in one corner all nice and quiet for a spell; a month or more I guess 't was she laid there on that krawm-heap, atop of other ole rubbidge, till one time I was out there grinding me up my plaice-spear, I believe it was, and all to once there come a set-fired funny thumpin' sound like — ker-chunk, kerplunk!

Suppn' that way she appeared to sound, but allus jest six on 'em to a lick at fust, reg'lar as clock-work.

"There wa'n't nary soul else into that building but me; I knowed that all right, but to make a dead sure thing, I up and ransacked that barn high and low, but it never amounted to nothin' at all, for I found them thumps come direct outen that ole rusty oil-can, and no place else. As I was saying, at the fust send-off, there was allus jest six on 'em to a time, and I knowed they was a proper forerunner fast enough, but it was quite a few days afore ever I ketched onto jest what was like to be the correct definition to her. A forerunner, ye know, is one thing, but to allus take and read the correct definition to her is liable to stick a man sometimes, without he 's all posted up in them things."

"Ef you hain't, Skip' Job," put in Asa Fairway, "I dunno who in tunkett is round here!"

"Them kind of things seldom ever puts me out no great at this day o' the world," said Job modestly. "One afternoon I was settin' out there kind o' studying of it over like, and all to once I see that them same six thumps from that can was a sign that sister Jane was liable to stop round here along on us jest six months more, and no longer. She 'd

jest barely commenced to be sickly about that time, you rec'lect.

"Wal, sir, that ole can kept right on thumping out them six clips to a time for an even month, and then she let up on one thump, and slacked down to five. I used to feel so aggravated along o' the dod-blasted thing some days, I 'd up and kick her all round the barn floor chock out into the hen-yard, but 't wa'n't no manner o' use, and never made a mite of difference, not a mite. Soon 's ever I 'd come to git through kickin' of her, she 'd jest up and give out them same ole thumps ag'in, so fin'lly I never paid no more attention to her, and she kept right on thumping off and on whenever she took the notion, but I was pertikler to notice every month she let up on jest one clip, and sister Jane she kept right on failin' stiddy all the time, ye know, though Lord knows she drinked every namable thing in the shape of med'cine ever was heern tell on. Wal, sir, them thumps fin'lly come down to jest only one, and that one kept dwindlin' away fainter and fainter, till bimeby Jane she got through. The ole can sets up there to the barn yit, but nary a yip has ever come outen her sence."

A pause followed this narrative of Job Gaskett's, during which his listeners chewed their quids re-

flectively, while the clucking of Cap'n Roundturn's false teeth became painfully noticeable.

"All them kind of things is sing'lar, and there 's no rubbing of it out neither," Job continued in a few minutes. "I cal'late there ain't no real proper definition to 'em, for the very reason 't wa'n't intended ever there should be a one. Now there was one o' them drummer fellers put up over night to my house one time, and I was tellin' him in regards to that 'ere scrape of my woman's when the ole witch teched the mare, same 's I was jest now speaking of. Wal, sir, this 'ere drummer he was an extry smart-appearin' sort of chap, and I allowed he was posted on most everything right chock to the handle, for sure. Why, he had a head onto him same 's a wooden god; bigger 'n what Dan'l Webster's ever dared to be, so 's I cal'lated prob'ly you could n't stick him on nothin' in reason; but be dinged ef he did n't own up that three or four o' them nuts I give him to crack that night was reg'lar ole clinchers, and no mistake!

"Said they jest knocked him fair silly, they did, so 's he would n't pretend to try and give no why and wherefore to 'em, but he 'lowed how he see in his paper one time where a lot of them rich ole college fellers up to the west'ard back o' Baws'n somewheres, had turned to and j'ined a sort o' club

like, or some sich thing, to hold meetings once in every so often, and overhaul jest sich works as I was tellin' of, so 's to see ef they could n't git the true bearings someways. I told him, s' I, 'They can't never tell nothin' in regards to 'em, for the reason 't wa'n't never intended we should git holt on 't. It 'll be jest time and money hove clean to the dogs,' s' I, 'and that 's all 't will amount to.' "

"That 's as true 's preachin', too!" Cap'n Round-turn declared. "Whatever them pore half-fools can make out on 't won't amount to a row of pins, but godfrey mighty, you! Them fellers' time don't come very high, by no manner of means, and somebody may git a dollar outen 'em, someways! In room o' holding of 'em back none, I 'd sooner say pay 'em out plenty o' slack line, and let 'em go it, full tilt."

"Wal, yas," said Job, "I s'pose they might as well mull the things over amongst 'em as not. 'T won't do no great hurt, ef it don't do no good,' as the ole feller said the time he turned to and let go his anchor without no cable bent onto her! But ef them fellers lacks mateeril for to try their head-pieces onto, I 'll bate a hat I can deal out enough on 't to keep 'em guessin' for the next twelvemonth, and resk it!

"Now you take the time they fetched ole Skip'

Sim Kentle ashore from his vessel here to this Cove. You rec'lect it, Cap'n Roundturn? 'T was the time I re-topped the ole Fair Wind up there to your shore, — much as thirty odd year sence, I guess. That 'ere ole crooked little apple-tree, that sets close up ag'in' the eastern end o' the house, was all chock-a-block with blossoms, when they lugged Skip' Sim up home there that spring, but soon 's ever he was once to bed in good shape, be jiggered ef them blossoms did n't turn to and commence falling off'n her!

"They pretended to say at the fust send-off, that Skip' Sim had ketched the fever, but it turned out suppn' ailed his liver; that 's what was the matter o' *him*, — his liver kept on shrinkin' away stiddy, and them set-fired blossoms kept on droppin' and droppin' jest so stiddy, too. Bimeby, when they 'd every dod-blasted one fell off'n that tree, be dinged ef the leaves did n't commence a-dreeping off'n her too!

"That 's a fact, you! I 'm giving of it to ye straight 's a gun bar'l. I was right to home here through the whole on 't, repairin' up my vessel, and was knowing to all the pertiklers jest like a book. The way it was, Skip' Sim's liver fin'lly come to git eat all up complete; or else she dried up, or run out; I can't jest rightly say for certain

to this time jest what it was ailded her, but anyways, I know Skip' Sim he lost his liver clip and clean, and time she was all gone complete, that 'ere ole apple-tree was stripped right to bare poles ; jest as naked she was as ever you see her winter-times!

"Wal, ole Doctor Gaskett, he started in right off to grow a brand spangin' new liver into Skip' Sim, but seems 's though he could n't make out to git no great headway on along the fust on 't, and I know it was kind o' hinted round on the sly like for a spell, that the ole sir had went to work and bit off more 'n what he could chaw that time.

"Anyways, Skip' Sim, he jest laid there to bed for weeks, lookin' pretty blame' streaked, now I 'll assure ye, but bimeby though, seems 's though ole sir, he fin'lly made out to git a new liver sprouted in good shape, and jes' soon 's ever he done so, set-fire ef them apple-tree leaves did n't commence to bud out ag'in, and time Skip's new liver had got a proper good holt, that 'ere tree was all bloomed out ag'in, solid full of blossoms, same 's she was when they fust fetched him ashore. Yas, sir, she was so, and now let them club fellers up to the west'ard take and shove *that* into their pipes and smoke it a spell!

"Way it was in them days round here, folks all allowed ole sir done a master big job for Skip' Sim,

but gracious evers! at this day o' the world, they tell me 't ain't no put-out to grow a new liver. I cal'late you can turn to any day and git a one ef only you go to work right, and have got the stuff to pay for her."

Although this striking story was perfectly well-known in the Cove, Skipper Job's hearers listened attentively to the end, partly because he was recognized as the highest authority upon the subject in hand, and partly because repetition of stories was a privilege shared by all frequenters of the store. At this point in the proceedings, Asa Fairway said to a man reclining upon a heap of meal bags: —

"Let 's see, John Ed, wa'n't it you that run acrost ole Skip' Nate Kentle out here in the bay, one time?"

"Yas, sir-ee!" promptly answered this individual. "I see him, and passed the time o' day along on him, too, sure 's ever you 're setting where you be. 'T was more 'n a dezen years after he was lost, but he let on jest who he was, though I should knowed his voice all right ef he had n't told me."

"He 'd took the shape of a hagdon, had n't he, John Ed?" Job Gaskett asked. "The heft o' them ole fellers doos, I 've allus took notice."

"Yas," answered John Ed, as he straightened up. "Yas, sir; that 's jest the style he showed

hisself to me in that time; jest one o' these common hagdons, or mack'rel gulls, I b'lieve some calls 'em. The way it was that time was like this. When I sot out that mornin', early, she was dungeon thick o' fog, and nigh stark calm, too. I had to row my hooker more 'n two mile outside the Hue and Cry afore ever I struck ary breeze at all. Then I took jest the leastest little air o' wind out here to the s'uth'ard, and made out to fan along for a spell, but it was dretful mod'rate, and part of the time I never had scursely steerage-way onto me. My gear was all sot out on the 'Gardin' that time, but she was so master-thick I could n't see ary 'marks,' and must have fooled away another hour afore ever I got onto the gear.

"Wal, I commenced under-running the fust string, and directly I took notice of this 'ere hagdon roostin' right atop o' my weather trawl-buoy. 'T was drawring along towards noontime then, and fin'lly there come quite a scale, so 's the sun very nigh bust out one spell, and I see this 'ere ole feller settin' there atop of that trawl-kag, all good and plain, cocking of his blame' head at me, big as ole Cuffey.

"Wal, thinks I to myself, dinged ef you don't make out to be some tame, you! Wonder how nigh can I steal up on ye, afore ever you 'll take

and skip! Wal, I kept on under-runnin' my trawl sort of easy like, till I 'll bate I wa'n't a boat's length off'n him, when he up and says, jest as nach'al as life, 'Good morning, John Ed,' s' he. Wal, now, it give me a master of a start, that did; there 's no rubbing that out, though, as a gin'ral thing, sich works never jar me for a cent, but this here kind o' come on me so blame' sudden and onexpected like, ye see!

"But there! I knowed right away jest who 't was, though, soon 's ever he yipped, and, says I, 'This here 's Skip' Nate Kentle, ain't it?'

"'That 's *jest* who 't is,' s' he. 'How 's all the folks makin' of it home there to the Cove?' s' he.

"Wal, by that time, I was all tanto ag'in; cool 's a cowcumber, so I turned to and give him a kind of gin'ral average how things was workin' ashore here, and then I sot out to pump him a grain about how was he fixed hisself, but he never give me no more chance.

"'This won't do for me!' s' he. 'I got to be movin' along. Give 'em all my best respects to home, there,' s' he, and off he put her about east-southeast, nigh 's ever I could set it, jes' though the devil kicked him on end. Of course, I 'd allus heern the ole folks tell about hagdons being them that 's dead and gone, and 'specially them that 's

been lost to sea, but I never give the thing no great thought till I come to see it proved this way."

"Oh, wal, there, you!" put in Skipper Job, "for the matter o' that, it don't need no proving; not at this day o' the world, it don't! It 's gospel-truth, and I 've knowed it ever sence I was the bigness of a trawl-kag. Ole Skip' Nate Kentle, him you was speaking along on that time, was lost into the ole 'pink' Elizy Anna, of Annisquam, in the fall o' '68. I know Enoch Spurshoe over to the Neck, he was shipped to go cook 'long of him that trip, and come down to the w'arft the vessel was laying to, the night afore they cal'lated to leave, but he see a rat shin ashore on one o' the breastlines, and jest shifted his mind on the spot. He turned to and jerked his dunnage outen her quick 's ever the Lord would let him, so Skip' Nate, he shipped one o' them Kunkett road Grommetses to go cook in room o' Enoch, and in jest two weeks' time to a day they was every soul on 'em drownded to Matinicus Rock. You can allus bate rats ain't cal'lating to skin outen no vessel that way for nothin', and never was.

"But talking about losin' vessels puts me in mind of the time father was lost into the ole Olive Branch, there. I wa'n't only about ten year old, then, and there was six of us young fry home along

o' mother. 'T was a master-breeze o' wind, that one was; and down to Bay Shelore, where the ole sir was to, nineteen sail of our vessels was lost one way or another. Some on 'em dragged ashore; some on 'em foundered; a number was in collusion; and there was quite a few turned turtle trying to work outen the Bay that night. It blowed here like a man, and for that matter, it swept nigh the whole coast, but what I 'm coming at is this 'ere.

"Up to our house there, along towards midnight, they commenced poundin' and bangin' of her fit to stave her sides and roof in chock to the cellar! Of all the hell-fired rackets ever I heern yit, that was the wust one! It skeered us young ones most to conniptions, but mother, she bunched us all together into the settin'-room downstairs, and told me and brother Sam jest what was to pay. You could n't learn her nothin' about all them kind of things, 'cause she 'd been there afore, mother had, and she knowed blame' well father was a goner, soon 's ever them hellish works commenced.

"Wal, sir, they kept up that 'ere stiddy bangin' and whangin' of that ole house pretty nigh all night long, without no let-up. Why, them clips they give it sounded for all the world jest like somebody was standin' off and giving of it to her with thundering great mallets and top-mauls, so 's

you 'd cal'lated for sure they 'd stove off half the shingles, and shook down the plaster afore ever they slacked up! But come next morning, and there wa'n't so much as a scratch to be seen on that house from cellar to ritch-board!"

"Dod-blow me ef that ain't some sing'lar, you!" exclaimed Asa Fairway, gazing earnestly at Skipper Job. "And you pretend to say the ole Olive Branch went that same night? My uncle Joel went cook aboard o' her."

"That 's the time she went!" replied Job decidedly. "She made out to turn turtle on 'em about two o'clock in the mornin', nigh 's ever we could make out. There wa'n't but half a dezen sail of the fleet that clawed out all clear o' the bay in that breeze, and four o' them was 'pinks.' Ole Skip' Tommy Spurshoe allus stuck to it he was in comp'ny that night along o' father's vessel, into the ole Good Intent, and he 'lowed how he see the Olive Branch hove down by a master-great holler sea; a reg'lar ole he-one, he said; so 's she never got on her legs ag'in. This was anigh two in the mornin', and no one ever see no sign of her sence, nor her crowd neither!"

"But that 'ere basting they give your house that night, Job, is what allus gits me!" said Simeon. "Puts me in mind of the works the ole folks allus

and forever used to be gossupin' about when we was youngsters. Sich works ain't nigh so common round here of late years as they was them times. Now you take it afore Hetty Moye and aunt Polly got through, and them two jest fairly kept things humming here to this Cove with their set-fired works and pranks! Blowed ef 't wa'n't downright horrid the works them two ole fly-by-nights was into them days!"

"Oh, them two was jest only rank pizen, them two allus was," said Skipper Job, tilting back in his chair. "You take and once let ary pore devil git on the wrong side of aunt Polly, and 't was all day along o' *him*, be jiggered ef 't wa'n't, now! She 'd awful quick figger out someways to git a come-uppance along on him, and don't you think for a minute she would n't!"

"Set-fire, you! I guess she would *some* quick!" cried Simeon. "And you come to take ole Sairy Kentle up atop o' the hill there; you take and let her heave that dod-blowed ole bridle o' hern round a feller's neck all good and taut, and it 's a chance ef he did n't wisht most damn'ly he never 'd seen the light o' day afore ever she got through along on him!

"Wal, I should ruther guess he would so, jest a few!" Skipper Gaskett said dryly. "Prob'ly

that 's pooty much how ole Skip' Nate Spurshoe looked at it the time she bridled him and driv him chock to the Nubble on one o' them hell-fired exhibitions o' hern. I tell ye it doos knock tar-water, the ructions and goin's on there was here to this Cove in them days! Why, you! I don't cal'late them days there was ary Skipper to this place but what dassent turn to and git his vessel under way without he 'd been up and fixed things all straight along of aunt Polly Futtock fust. Set-fire! but what slathers of tobacco I 've seed backed up to her place there, even since I commenced to go myself!"

"That 's a fact, Job!" exclaimed Sheriff Windseye. "And snuff, too! Any God's quantity of snuff and tea she used to git right along stiddy. Why, 't was allus counted nothin' less than a reg'lar temptation of Prov'dence to make a start for the Cape Shore in the spring o' the year without you 'd been up there to aunt Polly's fust, and bought your luck in good shape! I take notice I allus done so myself in my business as long 's ever I went, and I guess them that hain't is plaguy scattering to this Cove, ef they 've got any age at all onto 'em. It 's some sing'lar though, when you come to think how them ole fly-by-nights has all died out round this section of the country."

"Died out be jiggered, you!" cried Job Gaskett indignantly. "Them style of folks ain't died out by a jugful; not yit awhile they ain't! Don't you go running away along o' no sich idee as that, Cap'n, because ef you do, betwixt you and me and the windlass-bitt, you 're going to git left, bad! I 'm tellin' of ye there 's folks right here to this Cove to-day that 's jest as well fitting to heave the bridle, and tech cream, and upset loads of hay, and raise ructions gin'ally, as ever ary one o' them ole ancient style folks was; and nothin' in God's world only six foot of cold sod won't take it outen 'em, neither!"

"Wal, I dunno about that, Skip' Job," the Sheriff said doubtfully. "Folks around in jest this section as a rule is gitting most too fur advanced now" —

"So they be, you!" broke in Cap'n Roundturn. "A sight too fur advanced!"

"That 's what I claim," Sheriff Windseye went on. "Them kind o' things may go down yit with them ignorant Spanish outlandishmen same as we fit a spell ago; pore low-down Hindoos like, that dunno so much as a creetur', and is actually eatin' one another yit, they tell me, — prob'ly *they* may take stock into sich like works still, but I swan I hope us folks jest round here is

gitting most too much posted up at this day o' the world."

"'T ain't no question of bein' posted up at all!" Skipper Job persisted, warming up decidedly in defense of a cherished theory. "Fifty year ago folks round here was better posted up 'n what they be now, by fire! and a damn sight smarter in every way, shape, and manner! Look at the West Injy business there was carried on here to this Cove them days; look at the master-great fleet of fishermen there was fitted out here every spring-time; thirty odd sail o' vessels owned right here to this one place; look at the kentals of fish there was made here every year, and the stack of cooper-shops a-goin' of it full tilt, so 's every living soul here was jumpin' to it for God's sakes the year round a-coining the money hand over hand, and *now* look at what is there here, you?

"Nothin'. Jest plain nothin' at all. Every dod-blasted thing jest deado! Vessels all gone, w'arfts all gone; and all our smart men gone too, up back o' the meeting-house, there; but I take most pertikler notice that the time they was livin' here, and doing double and thribble the business in ary week that you fellers see in a year's time, *they* did n't appear to begredge a dollar for the sake of keepin' on the right side of Polly Futtock!

You can turn to and claim folks round here is a ter'ble sight better posted now'days, but ef there 's ary man alive here to this Cove to-day could learn them ole sirs how to git a living, I 'll thank ye kindly to jest up and p'int him out to me. That 's every cussed thing ever I 'll ask on ye; jest up and p'int him right out!" And Skipper Job looked about him at the assemblage defiantly.

"Yas, sir," Cap'n Roundturn said finally, evidently deeming it on the whole wiser to count himself in with the old régime, "There certainly was a tremendious smart set of folks doin' business to this Cove them days, and it wa'n't no habit of ourn to take much chances, neither. I 'll presume to say there ain't no case on record where a vessel ever left this Cove on her fust trip in the spring o' the year without she 'd made a short hitch to the nor'ard fust, for good luck. Mebbe there wa'n't nothin' into sich a pro-cess, and then ag'in mebbe there was consid'ble little into it, and I allus felt a sight easier for doin' of it, to the last of my going."

"So did I, Cap'n!" cried Job Gaskett. "I allus done so, reg'lar; and so I would now ef I wa'n't looking for trouble, but I cal'late Cap'n Windseye here allows how 't wa'n't nothin' but witchery into it."

"No sich a thing!" the Sheriff declared, at once resenting this slur upon his seamanship. "I allus made a hitch to the nor'ard quick 's ever my anchor was broke out! I ain't claiming there 's witch-works into no sich a custom as that. Everybody done that 'ere, and there 's plenty that doos so to-day to my knowin', but my p'int is that folks round here ain't so skeered of witch-doings as they was formerly."

"Wal you," Skipper Job retorted, "ef they hain't it 's their own lookout. Them that knows nothin' fears nothin', and I ain't s'posed to allus keep an eye to wind'ard for 'em. But being as we 're on this tack this evening, I can tell you another blame' sing'lar thing father see one time when he was into the ole Mirandy, bound home here with a trip o' fish from Canso.

"They 'd took a fresh easterly breeze, and whooped her right along in good shape, till father he cal'lated he was well to the west'ard of Monhegan, but it had been dungeon thick o' fog all the time coming up along, so 's they had n't sighted the fust namable thing. Along after sundown, she shet in thicker 'n ever she was; one o' them reg'lar ole black dreepin' fogs same 's to-night, so 's you would n't scursely see the windlass from jest be-aft the foremast, and father he commenced

bimeby to git kind of fidgety like at not making nothin', so fin'lly he goes chock forrard to hearken ef he could n't git holt of the rote on Seguin. This was about nine in the evening, accordin' to his tell, and the wind had sort o' petered out on 'em, but the sea held ter'ble hubbly yit, so 's everything along shore was breaking a clear torch. Wal, father he was standing there forrard listening away for all he was wuth, and hoping every secont to git holt o' suppn', when all of a sudden there come a big bust of music right aloft, nigh plumb overhead, and bang up ole music she was too; jest like one of these 'ere bands, only there was a dandy singin' of women's voices mixed up into her someways, so 's all hands allowed they never once heerd the beat on 't.

"Wal sir, while they was all hands on 'em standing round on deck there, takin' of it in, what did that ole fog-bank do but scale in a big hole right direct over the vessel, and the stars come out as bright as ever you see 'em, the slickest night ever growed, but all round everywheres else, without it was right plumb into this hole, the fog held thick as ma'sh mud, so 's you could take and chunk it up with a knife easy.

"O' course, it give 'em all hands a consid'ble start, and they all nach'ally called her a fore-

runner, but the ole sir in pertikler, he could n't seem to git over it all the ways home. He kept cal'latin' to find somebody laying dead for certain, but nothin' ever come outen it without it was at jest a quarter after nine that same evening me and brother Sam was borned!"

"Sho, you!" exclaimed Sheriff Windseye. "I don't doubt but what the ole sir was some tickled to find it wa'n't no wuss! Wal, I must be gitting along up the ro'd. Goin' up my way, Asy?"

"Hold on a secont afore you fill away, Cap'n," said Job. "There 's jest one thing I want you should answer me afore this settin' is closed. P'raps you 'll pretend to say it don't make no difference with the pork ef you stick a hog on the flood tide or on the ebb?"

"Wal," the Sheriff answered after a moment's reflection, "I ain't prepared to give no opinion on that 'ere jest yit. I 've allus heerd tell how it done so, of course, but I ain't never made no pertikler test on it myself. I won't say as it doos, and I won't say *but* it doos."

"Oh, you won't, won't ye!" cried Job. "Wal now, I 've took and tested of it right chock to the handle, and you 'll find pork that 's killed on the ebb will shrink away one quarter part every dog-gone time! Now there was ole Skip' Ben Ken-

tle up on the mill-dam ro'd there, he was called a master hand to stick pigs, and done about the whole of sich jobs up round there after he come to quit going. Them folks up there used to 'low Skip' Ben knowed jest the bearings of the creetur's jug'lar, so 's he could allus fetch her the very fust swipe o' the knife; and you take him and he was allus jest so careful to make dead sure by the almanac that the tide had n't noways pinched off a grain afore ever he commenced work. He knowed blame' good how the thing worked, and so doos the most of them ole farmers way out back here now-'days.

"You turn to and frog it up on the mill-dam ro'd there, and ask ole Jeff Grommet how 't is about it. You take and go up to his place there and tell him right to his face you got your doubts about it, and see how quick he 'll go into the air! I cal'late he 'd be apt to up and take a stick o' cordwood to a feller ef ever he should hang it out there wa'n't nothin' into the idee. But set-fire, you! What sense is there chowin' of it over? It 's gospel-truth all right, and soon 's ever you come to look at it, there ain't a thing onraytion-able about it; not a thing. You won't deny but what the ebb tide is allus ter'ble drawrin', will ye, or *will* ye though, so 's to allus be on the off-side?

How many sick folks can ever you make out to reckon up here to this Cove that 's got through without it was on the ebb, or leastways at low-water slack, afore ever the flood had commenced to make the leastest dite by the shore? Guess, by fire, you 'll find them that hain't got through on the strength o' the ebb is consid'ble few and fur between, now. The ebb tide makes out to dreen the life clean outen 'em slick as a whistle, every time!

"Then ag'in, we 'll say you take and go down to the shore here anywheres to fill a bucket o' salt water to wash anybody with that 's rheumaticky, and you 've allus got to be sure and fill her on the ebb, so 's it will be good and drawrin', you know, or ef you don't, you 'll be apt to wisht most damn'ly ye had, for water that 's filled on the flood will drive them gripes and rheumatics chock to your vitals, sure 's ever the sun rises and sets!"

V

THE WITCH-BRIDLE

In Killick Cove the family woodlots still furnished most of the fuel used, yet in very cold weather there was a certain amount of coal required for the tall, bedizened stoves which blistered the paint on the mantelpiece of many a sitting-room in the village.

Among the most unmistakable signs of winter's approach were the arrival of Cap'n Job Gaskett's diminutive cargo of coal at the town wharf, and the subsequent sounds of his shovel throughout the Cove as he delivered it from a bright blue cart backed up among the dry leaves at the cellar bulkheads. After this, it was reckoned time to screw on storm porches, and bank up the houses with rock-weed and kelp from the shore.

A prolonged dry spell extending well into October had been followed by a week of sombre clouds, with the wind piping fresh from the northeast, bringing the rote of the sea up across the eastern marshes in a constant jarring rumble, and driving

whirlwinds of dust and leaves up the narrow road till this already rocky thoroughfare was scoured down to bare ledge in many fresh places.

In anticipation of much needed rain at last, all over the Cove cisterns and gutters had been put in readiness, but further than a slight misting during each night, the howling northeaster brought no relief.

"What d' ye cal'late, Job?" inquired Cap'n Simeon Roundturn, as Job Gaskett occupied his usual chair in the store after supper. "Air we liable to git rain out o' this, or no?"

"I don't think it, you!" answered Job without hesitation. "When she fust come to take holt here to the east'ard this way, I was some in hopes she 'd make out to blow up a rainstorm, but I don't scursely look for a one now. This here acts to me jest like only one o' them reg'lar-built ole dry no'theasters, and nothin' else."

"Be consid'ble rough on folks round here ef the ground doos go to work and close up this fall without we git rain fust," said Cap'n Simeon. "I hear tell the alder swamps is nigh bone dry, so 's there won't be no wood hauled acrost 'em this winter unless'n there 's rain; and I 'll resk but what more 'n half the wells to this Cove has went dry a'ready."

"By fire, you!" exclaimed Job Gaskett. "The prospects in regards to water doos appear a grain duberous, and no mistake. Now this aft'noon there, I hauled up ole Mis' Lyddy Kentle her little pod o' coal, and come to go acrost Thread o' Life bridge, why I see the brook was dreened dry, or so nigh it there wa'n't no fun in it anyways; nothin' only the leastest little dite of dreeble left to her, and that 's sumpin' I seldom ever see the likes on afore sence I been round."

"Sho!" said Simeon. "I dunno for the life of me jest where them folks up that way would git a turn o' water to, 'lowin' the brook did take a notion to go back on 'em complete. That 's all the way ever I know for 'em to water up after their wells goes dry, without," he added jocosely, "without they was to turn to and call on ole aunt Polly, or else some other o' them ole ancient style folks to come back and help 'em out someways or 'nother."

"Mebbe they 'll be drove to that yit," said Job. "'T would n't be the fust time aunt Polly located water, that 's dead sure. Speakin' of her, I was thinking only to-day this is the time o' year, and jest the very weather would started her and the rest-part o' them ole fly-by-nights on one of them dod-blasted frolics o' theirn to Thread o' Life bridge."

"You don't cal'late them 's all the ones to this Cove ever was up to sich works by nights, do ye, Job?" asked Asa Fairway, suddenly stopping his usual vigorous whittling by the stove.

"All the ones?" repeated Cap'n Job disdainfully. "Not much they ain't all the ones! I don't misdoubt myself the least dite but what they 's folks now to Kentleses Hill and Number Four deestrict too, for that matter, that 's up to all the works ever aunt Polly tried on! I know plaguey well they is, come to that! They 's two famblies to my own knowing, down there to Number Four, that 's got bridles to their houses yit! I won't turn to and call ary person by name, but ef I ain't seen the tail-end of a reg'lar-built, proper ole witch-bridle hanging out from betwixt the mattresses of a bed to a certing house down there inside a fortni't's time, then all is, I never yit sot eye on a one nowheres!"

"Why, 't ain't the leastways onlikely!" exclaimed Asa. "I could turn to this minute and name you an ole sir down to the Lower Neck there, that kep' a bridle to his house, a-hanging right out in folkses sight 'longside the chimbly in the spare-room for years, and 'peared to set a store by her, too. I done him quite a consid'ble big favor one time, and I know he up and says to me then, 'Asy,'

s' he, 'take anything I got that 's mine,' s' he, 'without it 's the woman and that air ole bridle!' He was jest knowing enough not to leave that go fur out o' sight, I took good notice!"

"Set-fire, you!" cried Job, in a tone of deep disgust. "It don't look right for nobody, I don't give a rap who 't is, to take and hang on to them tormented ole witch-bridles so-fashion! All the fit way ever to serve them kind o' things is to heave 'em ker-chunk into the fire, and then mebbe you 'll know somewheres nigh where in tunkett they be to! Plague on the things, the time my ole sir put the L on to our ole place, come to rip off the boarding a grain, dinged ef there did n't hang a complete bridle, big 's life, all plastered in betwixt the studding, she was! Mother, she would n't leave nobody tech of the thing on no account, but took and ketched holt right off herself with the tongs, and flipped her out on the floor, full bigness. Extry big long one, this one was; guess she 'd go nigh on to three fathom, come to heave out the kinks, and haul her good and taut. Mother she cal'lated for sure 't was the same ole bridle Sairy Kentle hove round the neck of ole Skip' Nate Spurshoe, the time she and them other ole fly-by-nights turned to and rid him chock to the 'Ladle' and back afore daylight. You rec'lect

the L part to our ole home-place used to set up in the sheep pastur' back o' Kentleses Hill in them days, and seems 's though ole Sairy put up there all soul alone quite a few years afore she fin'lly got through. Mother she 'lowed this was her bridle no doubt, and says to us young uns right off, 'Don't ary one on ye come anigh, but,' s' she, 'I want the whole kit on ye should take notice of this bridle in real good shape, so 's to know jest what sich tormented things is like unto for all the rest-part o' your lives.' Dretful pertikler, she was. 'There,' s' she, 'this here strand is mostly wove out of tow, and this here one has allus got to be hair from a mare's tail, and all the rest-part,' s' she, 'is nothin' only the inside bark of a yaller birch tree.' Soon 's ever she 'd give us the whole bus'niss about them bridles all complete, she turned to and chucked this one into the fireplace, quicker 'n scat!"

"Served her good and right, too!" declared Asa Fairway. "You could n't learn your mother no great in regards to them kind o' works, now I tell ye what! She knowed well a bridle wa'n't no fittin' thing to leave laying round loose in no person's house them times, or now'days neither! There 's folks to-day right here to this Cove that ain't forgot how to heave the bridle, and don't you run

away with the idee they have!" he concluded, with an emphatic nod of the head.

"Without I 'm consid'ble mistakened," remarked Cap'n Roundturn, from his high desk behind the counter, "your mother, Job, was to ole Sairy Kentleses place up there the very same night Skip' Nate Spurshoe was attackted so scand'lous by that parcel of ole fly-by-nights, wa'n't she?"

"Godfrey mighty, yas!" replied Cap'n Job. "Mother was up to her place that evening to try and borry some med'cine for the ole sir. 'T wa'n't only jest a short spell after they 'd got married, that wa'n't. Set-fire, yas! Mother allus claimed she see the fust commencemint of them works all right enough, and master works she called 'em, too!"

"Someways or 'nother, I most forgit jest how it worked in the very fust send-off o' that 'ere scrape," said Asa Fairway, scratching his head reflectively. "Skip' Nate had been talking of it round how Sairy Kentle had teched his vessel so 's he could n't git ary decent trip o' fish, or what was the spat about betwixt the two at the fust send-off?"

"No, no!" answered Cap'n Gaskett, who was universally recognized as the highest possible authority on such matters. "That wa'n't the way on 't at all, Asy. You 're way off'n your course.

The fust commencemint was like unto this way — guess likely I 've heern it told over times enough to git the thing somewheres nigh straight, and resk it! Ye see ole Skip' Nate Spurshoe, him that was gran'sir to them Spurshoes was lost in the ole Marcellus, on Matinicus Rock, you rec'lect, he 'd only jest arrived home here from the Western Banks, with a trip o' fish, in the ole pink Equator. He 'd landed his fare up to the fish-yard islant same 's usual, but seems 's though he had n't quite fished out his whole bounty-time yit awhile that season, and so he was layin' here to the Cove sojering same 's they used to till his time was up, so 's to go down to the custom-house at the Harbor, and draw full bounty-money, ye see. All his crew without 't was three or four had went home, but ole Skip' he 'd turn to and git under way of a nice mod'rit day with what few still stopped aboard 'long on him, and jest drop outside here onto the aidge o' Betty Moody's Gardin, mebbe, or some place, anyways, where they could down killick in tol'ble shoal water.

"Then they 'd turn to, and heave a line or two over the vessel's rail, jest so 's to say they 'd fished ag'in that day, and then up anchor, fill away, and give it to her back in home here, with a little air o' wind to the south'ard, by the fust of the

aft'noon. Take and chalk her right down slappo in the book, ''Nother day's fishing outside.' Got it all worked down to a consid'ble fine thing them times, had n't they, Simeon?"

"Oh, complete!" replied Cap'n Roundturn, with an approving grin. "Cute enough, some o' them ole fellers was. There was any God's quantity got rich off'n the bounty them times, and never so much as wet ary line over the rail! Reg'lar out-and-out snap it must been for 'em them days!"

"I only wisht we had half the snap to this day o' the world!" continued Cap'n Job. "But what I 'm coming at, seems 's though old Skip' Nate come ashore from his vessel one aft'noon after they 'd been out on the Gardin sojering away bounty-time same 's usual, and he 'd fetched ashore 'long on him a blame' great bundle o' stripped halibut, cal'lating to lug her up home to his woman.

"Lived clean away out back here to hell and gone, he did — I was to his ole cellar-hole only t' other day, hunting up my cow — and seems 's though nigh dark, come to git somewheres about half way over Kentleses Hill, and he run plump afoul on ole Sairy coming down along. It 'pears them two wa'n't none too chummy jest about that time, for the reason that ole Sairy had been makin' some little gossup-talk round amongst folks in re-

gards to Skip' Nate's putting in so dod-blowed much bounty-time after he 'd got home with his vessel that fall, and ole Skip' was knowin' to it in good shape.

"So bimeby, when ole Sairy come to ask him this time would he give her some o' the stripped halibut for winter, he jest says right up-and-comin', 'No, sir-ee, sir! Not the fust dinged ioty 'll you git out o' me, marm!' 'Cordin' to the tell of some folks, he 'lowed he 'd see her chock to Jericho 'fore ever he 'd spare her no fish, but I allus misdoubted ef ever he done so, myself. Them that dasst up and say over that way to ary one of them ole ancient folks here to this Cove, was consid'ble scatterin', now I 'm telling of ye!"

"My soul, but you can bate high they was!" cried Asa Fairway. "'T was nothin' only a set-fired meracle ever Skip' Nate dasst deny her no halibut anyways!"

"So 't was!" assented Job; "but the way it worked, prob'ly the ole sir was nigh half slued with that red rum they used to fetch home from Novy Scoshy, them days. Why, sence my going, we 'd allus cal'late to have a kag of her lashed on deck, good and handy, with a tin dipper seized onto her by a lanyard! Turn to, all hands, and take holt, and drink hearty, too! That was the style aboard

a fisherman them days, ye know, and all the way ever I could account for Skip' Nate's acting that way, is he 'd been layin' right to that kag o' red rum pooty much all day out there on the Gardin, and was jest a grain how-come-ye-so. Anyways, he would n't spare Sairy Kentle no halibut that time, and seems 's though she up and told him right then and there how she 'd make him ache for it in every blame' bone there was to his karkis, and then she kep' on down along the ro'd to the west'ard.

"Skip' Nate he started up over the hill ag'in, but had only went a very short ways, when all to once the lashin's on his bundle of stripped halibut was cut clip and clean, so 's the fish flew all over the ro'd there, forty diff'rent ways for Sunday. Wall, o' course he nach'ally turned to right off to gaft onto 'em, and lash 'em together ag'in, — never once mistrusted nothin' outen the common run, ye see, — but by fire! quick 's ever he 'd make out to git one rope-yarn tied up good and solid, another would bust loose ag'in, and fin'lly, git them strips o' dry fish lashed up once more he could n't, not ef he went to the ole scratch!

"All of a suddin he heerd a rustling sound in amongst the alder bushes side o' the ro'd there, and bedide ef he did n't ketch sight o' Sairy Kentle jest makin' ready to heave a bridle at him.

Seems 's though she 'd slipped right around to ole Hetty Moyeses on the norrard side o' the hill, and borried a bridle of her, cal'lating to git a come-uppance right away off that very same night. All them ole ancient folks was allus and forever in cohoots together, ye know. What I mean, one was allus standin' by ready to take holt and help out t' other in any kind o' dod-blasted works, so Skip' Nate he see blame' quick how the land laid, and jest cut his cable you might say, and took up the ro'd for all he was wuth!

"Them days, ye see, it used to be the way that when one o' them kind of folks got after ary pore devil with her bridle, all the squeak ever he stood in God's world for shaking of her, was to cross water, or else a stone wall, ary one. Ef so be it he could jest make out to do ary one o' them two things, all the ole witch women-folks this side of hell could n't do him no hurt, not that time, anyways. There was sunthin' proper sing'lar 'bout the thing someways, so 's after that 'ere, the bridle could n't be hove over nobody, and Skip' Nate he jest chucked away his halibut into the ditch, and give it to her up over Kentleses Hill fair b'ilin', cal'latin' to try and make the ole stone wall that commences there to the sou'west corner o' Amis Kentleses mowin' field.

"Ole Sairy, she fetched a master leap out o' them bushes, and after him same 's a streak, a-swinging of her bridle over her head, and screechin' and cacklin' fit to raise the dead, but by fire! Skip' Nate made out to save his bacon that time, anyways, though the very same secont he lep' acrost that wall, ole Sairy let go the bridle at him, so 's they allus 'lowed she struck him, but in room o' falling fair round his neck, she jest brushed his shoulder like."

"Geewhitaker, you! but wa'n't that some close!" exclaimed Asa Fairway, with a sigh of relief. "I 'member me now pretty much all about that set fired racket. The ole folks used to set there to our place and gossup them things over amongst 'em more 'n a little."

"I 'll warrant ye they done so!" said Job, "and there was a blame' sight more 'n jest only gossup-talk to it, too! That 'ere turn in the ro'd atop o' the hill there has allus been called the Devil's Gap from that day to this, ye know. But there, what 's the good talkin'? There 's jest sich actions going on now'days — any grists on 'em! I cal'late there 's folks within cable's length of where we 're settin' to, that 's chock-a-block jammed full o' jest sich, only they 're cunning enough not to git ketched."

"Godfrey mighty, you!" cried Cap'n Round-

turn, "I ain't noways sure there ain't, myself, 'twixt you and me and the windlass-bitts! But jest how come it your mother got drawed into it that time, Job?"

"I 'll git round to that 'ere direc'ly, Cap'n," replied Job, by no means to be hurried in his narrative. "Seems 's though ole Sairy chafed consid'ble bad in regards to this here slip-up of hern, and made her brags everywheres round how one o' these days she 'd git a come-uppance 'long of Skip' Nate in a way he nor nobody else ever once dremp' on.

"So you see," Job Gaskett went on, "for quite a few weeks there, Skip' Nate was nigh skeered of his life, but bimeby I s'pose likely it sort of blowed over like, and he commenced to git his tail up ag'in a grain. For one thing, I rec'lect mother told how his cow kep' gitting mired in the hackmatack swamp that fall, and how his woman was bothered to death in gitting butter to come every blame' time she sot out to churn, and all sich-like works was goin' on stiddy, so 's fin'lly him and his folks figgered ole Sairy cal'lated to take it out that way, same 's them ole creetur's allus and forever used to be doing of, 'lowin' they held a gredge ag'in' ye.

"Wall, by this time 't was 'way along late in the

fall o' the year and nigh time for snow to fly, so 's the bulk of the vessels was thinking o' haulin' up. Bimeby one day she commenced herming up good and greasy here to loo'ard for a gale o' wind, and by night-time I know mother said it had canted out about east-no'theast, blowin' like a man, thick o' rain and slate by spells, and a-breezening on stiddy every minute, till down there to our place you could n't hear talkin', for the rote there was a-going.

"I wa'n't only a consid'ble small shaver then, but I allus rec'lect mother's tellin' of us kids 't was jest the time o' year, and jest the very style night ole Sairy Kentle, and Hetty Moye, and all the rest-part of them ole ancient folks would be liable to pick for one of them hell-fired frolics o' theirn to Thread o' Life bridge. Blow my shirt ef ever I can set and hearken to the rote sounding anyways loud to this day, or hear the rustle of dry leaves under foot in the fall o' the year, without it puts me in mind of them same ole folks, and them dod-blasted high-jinks up there to the bridge."

"Same here," declared Asa Fairway. "Be jiggered ef I would n't lievser lay hove to in a Janooary breeze o' wind on Georges', sooner 'n take chances cruising round this Cove by nights in the fall o' the year! Seems 's ef I could hear the swish

of a bridle through the air every time I scuffled up the dry leaves in the ro'd there to Spurshoes' Holler by nights!"

"I can't noways abide 'em myself," said Skipper Job, "but what I was going to say, bimeby about nine o'clock this here nasty blowy night, the ole sir was took dretful bad with a colic that kep' growin' wuss and wuss till he like to died with the pain on 't. Mother she turned to and give him this to take, and that to take, and done everything in God's world she knowed, but could n't seem to strike nothin' would corroborate nor hender her no great, ary one, so fin'lly she took and wropped herself up tight, and put her for ole Sairy Kentleses.

"All them ole ancient folks was called clean away up at doctorin', ye know anyways, but Sairy Kentle in pertikler was nigh old 's the north star, and I cal'late what she did n't know about mixing up med'cines wa'n't noways wuth knowing. Them days she was counted an extry big herb amongst them kind o' folks, anyhow, and seems 's though she 'd turn to and mix up a master cure for the colic, that would lay ye out stiffer 'n ary handspike without you handled her jest so. I know for one thing there was rat into her, all baked black and cripsy, and pounded up fine, and wolfsbane, and I

won't say now jest what not, but she was a grand good med'cine to take holt, that I 'll gu'rantee!

"Wall, mother she footed it clean 'way up there this here dungeon-black stormy night a-purpose to see ef ole Sairy would n't spare her a little grain of that same cure, bein' as the ole sir was attackted so bad, and that 's all the way ever she come to be anyways knowing in regards to them works there to Skip' Nate's that night.

"Sairy she made out to spare her a little small vial o' the colic cure, and jest as she done so, that very same minute there come the divil's own thumping and shindy on the ruff, right chock overhead, so 's mother 'lowed it like to stunded her.

"'Mis' Gaskitt,' says ole Sairy right off spango, 'I 'll have to take and leave ye, bein's I got a pertikler app'intmint to keep this evening, but,' s' she, 'I want you should set right here where you be so 's to git all good and rested up 'fore ever you go. Don't be noways put out at nothin' you may happen to sight, for I'll gu'rantee there won't be the leastest thing do you no hurt,' s' she. Some ways or 'nother ole Sairy allus used to be real clever 'long of mother, reg'lar. Wall, sir, she had n't more 'n fairly out with the words, 'fore she fetched a slat, and flippo! away she went right chock into nothin', same 's a soap-bubble doos when she busts,

eggsac'ly, and in room of her, to the very spot where she sot, mother see this tormented great big shiny black cat setting there licking her chops, and blinkin' away at her, big 's ole Cuffey!"

"I don't b'lieve ary word o' no sich rubbidge, you!" exclaimed Sheriff Windseye, who had just dropped in. "I 've allus and forever been hearing that same gossup-talk here to this Cove, but setfire! at this day o' the world, I 'd full lievser take stock into that rot they pretend to call grav'tation!" The Sheriff had recently announced his intention of running for the legislature, and perhaps felt that he should now rise superior to vulgar superstition.

"Dod-blow it all!" cried Job. "I would n't turn my hand to have ye b'lieve it or disb'lieve it, ary one, Cap'n Windseye. It 's God's own truth jest the same, and I 'm tellin' of it jest eggsac'ly for all the world the way I 've allus heerd it from them that see it, sence I was the bigness of a blame' trawl-kag!"

"Godfrey mighty!" put in Asa Fairway. "Seems 's though 't ain't scursely raytionable to misdoubt the truth on 't at this day o' the world! Bedide ef you ain't as much call to set there and tell us how C'lumbus never come ashore up there to Plymith! I would n't wonder ef it did n't give

the ole lady a master start though, seein' sichlike works going on right afore her that way."

"Never jarred her a mite!" declared Job. "Not a cent's wuth! No more 'n 't would me, for I cal'late I seen cur'user works 'n ever them made out to be, not to say but what them was consid'ble cur'us, too.

"This here ole black cat she sot there only a short spell, and then all to once lep' chock into the fireplace and up chimbly 'fore ever you 'd say Jack Robinson! Then there come a hell-fired ole cacklin' and laughin' up there on the ruff from two or three more o' them ole ancient folks, and then pooty quick off they went together through the air, the whole blame' kit on 'em — same 's so many ole night-herins. By fire! but ye know mother she jest made up her mind there was going to be some master high jinks to Thread o' Life bridge that night, for a sure thing!

"They allus allowed how them days Betty Baker would skip over from Ole Kunkett ways, and Joanny Binney she 'd skin down acrost country from Birch Neck, and ole Matty Merton clean away up to the head of the crick, all them ole fly-by-nights was liable to git together 'long of our folks for a frolic quick 's ever it come the fall o' the year. Betwixt us and the windlass-bitts," con-

tinued Job, lowering his voice with a quick glance about him, "I 've heern it kind of gossuped round on the sly like, how ole Mis' Rhody Kentle up to the Top o' the P'int there, you take her mother, and she 'd turn out ef she took a notion, and hold up her end to them frolics 'long o' the best on 'em. Mind ye, I won't say as ever she done so, but I 've heern it talked she would so ef there was a little sumpin extry in the wind.

"But you see this pertikler night them ole creetur's was fairly chock-a-block full o' mischeef. They had pertikler fish to fry jest about that time, and I cal'late the whole set-fired troop on 'em was turned out all greased up in good shape with that 'ere bloody 'intmint o' theirn, so 's to fly through the air same 's ary hagdon-gull. You un'stand Skip' Nate's woman there, she 'd been gone away nigh onto a week's time then, a-doing for a darter o' hern that was layin' sick to Dog-fish P'int, so 's the ole sir was left all soul alone there to home without nobody to do for him at all, nor jest so much 's even keep him comp'ny by nights.

"Seems 's though ever sence his woman quit him that way, Skip' Nate he 'd been growing ter'ble on-easy ag'in for fear of bein' ketched onawares by night-times, so 's 't was seldom ever he dasst turn in at all till nigh daylight, and come to take it this

here dungeon-black, blowy night, why nach'ally he had the fidgits onto him wuss 'n ever he had.

"Gracious evers, they 'lowed he 'd turned to and rigged up a set of shores ag'in' the two outside doors, and spiked hard-wood cleats atop of every blame' sash there was to the house, and every night reg'lar he 'd take and shove his thunderin' great, over-growed sea-chist chock up ag'in' the bedroom door where he slep' to. She was a master big heavy chist, so 's 't was much 's ever he could budge her hisself, and him as stocky built, withey ole feller too, as ever was raised to this Cove.

"Wall, it come this here dretful dark, stormy night, and he done same 's ever with the door soon 's ever it commenced to grow dark un'neath o' the table, and lit him up a pair o' big candles in room of jest only one, same 's he most gin'ally had. Seems 's though he figgered this night he 'd full better set up in the rockin'-cheer, in room of turnin' in, though he never cal'lated to take a wink o' sleep anyways, but it 'pears he did bimeby kind o' lose hisself like, and fust thing he knowed he was woke up by the scraping of that plaguey great chist acrost the floor, and be jiggered ef them tormented ole trollops had n't made out to git inside someways, and shove open his bedroom door quite a few inches so quick! Up he lep' for God's sakes, and

hove hisself ag'in the door with all his heft, but in room o' shettin' of her none, she kep' on opening stiddy jest so fast, till all to once some on 'em hove a bridle through the gap, and come within one o' fetching of him the fust clip.

"Wal, the pore ole divil see right off then 't was prob'ly all day 'long on him, but still it come acrost him he might by chance be able to fetch a leap into bed and haul the quilt over him someways so 's they could n't make out to heave that dod-blasted ole bridle round his neck, and so that 's what he tried on, and same time commenced to holler for resicue same 's a stuck pig, so 's they heern the shindy tol'ble plain chock down to the shore, mother said."

"Resicue? Who in tunkett did he cal'late would turn to and try on resicuing of him from them kind?" demanded Asa Fairway earnestly.

"Oh, jest fairly skeered out of all manner o' reason, the pore ole sir was, and not to blame neither!" said Job Gaskett. "Nach'ally his taking to bed same 's he done did n't amount to shucks anyways, for the dinged ole trollops jest turned to and cut the bed-kivers off'n him in less 'n no time at all, a-screechin' and cacklin' the wust ole kind o' way, and then they jest attackted of him fair scand'lous, the whole troop on 'em to

once, same 's a parcel o' set-fired dog-fish, 'cording to tell. The whole pack fell atop on him, and fit him tooth and nail, and like to have massacreed him outright 'fore ever they made out to git their dod-blasted ole bridle hauled good and taut round his neck. Then, by fire! of course his name was nothin' only jest mud! He was theirn then, clip and clean, huffs, horns, and hide, as the feller says, and 't was then they turned to and rid the ole sir through the thick o' the storm 'way down past Ole Kunkett village chock to the Bowl o' the Ladle, and back ag'in to this Cove, afore ever the fust streak of day showed up to the east'ard."

"Be jiggered, you! but wa'n't that some horrid, though!" cried Asa Fairway. "And cruelized the pore ole sir awful too, I allus heern tell, so 's come to git home ag'in he was blood and gurry nigh from head to foot, and the togs all ripped and tore off'n the back on him complete!"

"That 's an act'al fact," asserted Cap'n Job. "Why, they like to done him up for good and all that night. 'T was going on a month's time 'fore ever he was so 's to set foot out o' bed ag'in, and" —

"Jest what d' ye cal'late ever them ole folks done to Skip' Nate on this here master frolic you tell on, Job?" again interrupted Sheriff Winds-

eye, with a sidelong wink and leer at the others present. "I allus heern it said how come to git back home ag'in he was one o' the very lookin'est objic's ever went on two legs!"

"I guess likely that 's nothin' only gospil-truth, too, Cap'n Windseye," answered Job. "Godfrey mighty, you! why would n't he look that way, for king's sakes? Jest you turn to and take it right chock home to your own self for a secont, Cap'n. You cal'late you 're a consid'ble big herb round here, you allus do, but set-fire! ef half a dezen o' them same breed of ole she-divils had lep' atop o' you when you was all soul alone by night-time, and jest once made out to bridle ye up in proper good shape, and then took and rid ye a little matter of eighteen or twenty mile through rain and slate and mud in a living gale o' wind, a-proddin' and clawin' of ye stiddy the whole blame' trip out and back, and giving of ye reg'lar ole bungo everyways they could hit on, I 'll bate a pollock 'long o' ary man here it 's a chance ef you would n't come out on 't a dinged sight lookin'er objic' 'n what ole Skip' Nate was that time!"

VI

WHO FELL FROM ALOFT?

THROUGHOUT the day a dense bank of fog had hung like a pall over the wooded heights of Skipper's Island, leaving to view only a fringe of stunted spruces clinging to gray ledges near the water's edge. As night came on, the fog settled down and remorselessly swallowed everything in sight excepting here and there the blurry glimmer of a light in the scattered houses close to the shore.

A drizzling rain also set in, and the freshening southeast wind blew in fitful gusts across the narrow harbor, ruffling its waters into miniature whitecaps, and beating the halliards of several anchored fishing boats against their masts in ceaseless tattoo. Occasionally the faint bleat of sheep came down from among the boulders of the island, and during the lulls of wind the sea's dull rote could be heard as a long ground swell tumbled among the long kelps on the Hue and Cry.

Just before night the dark sails of the ancient

pinkey Rainbow loomed through the fog on her return from a trip to Bayport with herring. Asa Fairway and the two others of her crew soon came ashore in a dory, and at once betook themselves to the store, which sanctuary was already well filled by its usual frequenters and visitors from the weather-bound craft. In his customary seat of honor by the stove sat old Skipper Rufus Hull-down, delayed far beyond his usual hour by the mail boat's non-arrival on account of fog.

"You had it consid'ble thick coming down along to-day, Asy," said the old man, after Asa Fairway had given a brief résumé of the fish market.

"Master thick she was, and no mistake, uncle Rufy," assented he. "There was one spell when I cal'late it 's a chance ef we could seen ary hole in a forty foot ladder! Tell you what I *did* see up to the west'ard this trip, though, and that was ole Skip' Abe Spurshoe. He come aboard o' me of a Thursday aft'noon, I think 't was, and sent his best respects to you and all the rest-part o' the folks down here."

"Wal, wal, I want to know ef he 's so 's to go yit!" said uncle Rufus. "He ain't over and above kinky, though, I s'pose likely?"

"No," said Asa, "nothin' very antic about him at this day o' the world, I guess. The ole sir 'lows

he feels consid'ble streaked now by spells, he doos, but seems 's though there must be some buckram left into him, too, the way he keeps a-going. He wanted I should be sure and ask you what it was they called the ole Gertrude Spurshoe after she was sold foreign out o' here that time."

"Lemme see! Tell ye in a minute!" the old man said. "Falls of Ettrick, I b'lieve 't was. Some sich gawk of a name, anyways. Yas, that 's jest what 't was — Falls of Ettrick."

"Wal, then, that settles it," said Asa. "Seems 's though she 's gone to kingdom come! She laid her bones on the Diamond Shoal that last heavy breeze o' wind ever we had!"

"Git out, you!" exclaimed uncle Rufus, hitching forward his chair. "How in tunkett did ever you git holt of that?"

"Why," Asa replied, "ole Skip' there, he 'lowed he see in his paper where the English ship Falls of Ettrick was plunked on the Diamond Shoal and had went to pieces in that ole twister of a breeze there was a spell ago, and it come acrost him all to once that was jest what them parties turned to and called the ole Gerty the time they bought her outen this Cove here. Next mornin' he fetched the paper aboard and give her to me so 's you could see for yourself. 'T ain't only a

short little piece — I 'll take and read her out to ye myself."

So saying, Asa Fairway produced a crumpled newspaper, and putting on his glasses, read aloud with much precision the item referred to.

"Wal," said uncle Rufus, with something of a sigh. "Seems 's though the ole gal 's a goner, then. That 's her, without no doubt. Wal, wal. Sich is life. She was the very last one of the square-riggers ever they sot up here to this Cove, and one o' the best built ships ever left the State o' Maine, 'lowing I 'm any jedge. I see every stick o' timber went into her, and was one o' the gang to calk her, and I 'll gu'rantee you would n't strike ary hollow seam into her from the garboards chock to the wales!"

"A consid'ble smart appearing packet she was, too, I allus called her," Captain Job Gaskett remarked. "To be sure, I wa'n't only a young shaver the time she was launched, but I see her afterwards quite a few times loading there to Bayport, and then ole lady Spurshoe she 's got a set-fired great hand-made painting of her that hangs there into her settin' room — every dog-gone thing aboard all drawed out by hand, complete, now I tell ye! Prob'ly it 's one the ole sir hisself had drawed out somewheres."

"Lord, you!" exclaimed uncle Rufus. "I was along on him the time he had it took. 'T was one o' them Frenchmen done that job, there to Havre. Yas, there wa'n't nothin' the matter with the ole Gerty's looks, and she was full better 'n what she looked to be, — there 's where the beauty on 't come in! Burdensome, ye know; more 'n an average good sailer, and stiff 's a blame' church, even with a swep' hold. Speaking about the time she was launched though, why I was there too that day myself, and ain't got only a pair o' toes to my right foot on account on 't!"

"Sho! I want to know!" said Asa Fairway. "Git ketched someways, did ye?"

"Wal, yas, I kind o' mistrusted so," replied the old man. "Ye see I was consid'ble spry them days, and so they turned to and picked me out to knock away the dog-shore at the launching. That 's the very last thing that holds the vessel on the ways, ye know, and whoever has the job o' knockin' of it away is liable to do some pooty tall hus'ling to git out from un'neath of her with a whole hide. Some folks I know would n't try to git clear at all, but soon 's ever they 'd made out to knock away this 'ere dog-shore, they 'd take and scrouch down betwixt the ways jest as snug 's ever they could git, and let the ship and the whole business

slide right over 'em. That allus 'peared to me like takin' most too many chances, though, so quick 's ever I 'd knocked everything all clear, and see the ship commence a-moving, I fetched a master leap to git out, but seems 's though there was grease from off'n the ways on the sole o' my boot, so 's 't I slipped and made a bad misgo on 't. 'T was a dod-blowed wonder the tar wa'n't every mite squat outen me, but someways this 'ere foot made out to take the heft on 't, and ole Dr. Round-turn he turned to and trimmed them toes down slick 's a whistle."

"Wal there, you," exclaimed Job Gaskett. "That 's the fust time ever I heern tell o' that! I knowed you went quite a few v'yages offshore 'long of the ole sir into the Gerty, and allus un'-stood how you see some dretful cur'us works aboard on her."

"Godfrey mighty, you!" said uncle Rufus. "That was after she was sold foreign. She wa'n't the Gertrude Spurshoe no longer then. She was flying the English flag, and luggin' deals from Que-bec to Liv'pool."

"Oh, was that it? For king's sake, how ever come you shipping aboard one o' them English timber droghers out o' Quebec there?"

"Wal," said the old man, tapping the ashes

from his pipe, "I 'll soon tell ye. 'T was jest on account o' the fancy wages they was offering. As a gin'ral rule them timber ships was loaded out of all reason, ye see, and slues on 'em was lost afore ever they 'd git clear of the Gulf o' St. Lawrence. Come right down to the fine thing, betwixt you and me and the windlass-bitts, they was insured on so damn much I cal'late they could n't make to swim with it; but fin'lly there come a time when they was put to it to find crews for the blame' ole coffins without they 'd pay more 'n the going wages."

"Set-fire, you! I sh'd say so!" cried Job Gaskett. "Seems 's ef it was a kind o' duberous sight a-shipping 'fore the mast into one o' them hookers! Double and thribble the going wages would n't been no object to me!"

"Yas, yas, I un'stand," said uncle Rufus. "I dunno now what ever possessed us them days, but there *was* consid'ble many of our folks turned to and shipped into them same droghers out o' Quebec there. We 'd take and ship jest only by the run to Liv'pool, ye see, and like 's not make high 's seventy or eighty dollars out on 't. Then we 'd turn to and git aboard a steamer and give it to her back ag'in, and ship into another drogher right away, so 's there was dollars into it ef only your luck was tol'ble good."

"Wal, but 'lowing how a feller 's luck wa'n't none too good, he was liable to git snubbed up with a round turn, all standin' like!" said Skipper Job. "But I 'll tell ye, Uncle Rufe, I wisht to gracious you 'd turn to and reel us off the true hist'ry of them set-fired goin's on you see aboard that vessel. I 've heern tell how it was a sight wuss racket 'n what you see that time aboard the ole Harvester."

"Wal," said the old man, "they was cur'us works, the two on 'em, and I never asked nobody to believe ary one, myself. Allst ever I say is jest this much: I seen this thing with my own eyes, but 's fur 's you or anybody else is concerned, why you can take it or leave it, as the ole feller said. 'T ain't no sich a very lengthy yarn, noways.

"I went a couple o' v'yages offshore 'long of ole Cap'n Spurshoe into the Gerty, and then brother Ephe he coaxed me to stop to home a spell and go hand-lining along o' him into a little jigger he 'd only jest bought. We hung to that quite a few seasons, and 't was jest then them Englishmen gafted onto the Gerty. I never knowed at the time what it was they called her, nor nothin' only that she 'd been sold foreign for a crackin' ole price.

"Wal, fin'lly one night we was onlucky enough to strike the jigger on the tail-end of the Hue and

Cry out here. 'T was thick o' fog, and rough 's a grater out there, ye know; jest breaking a clear torch everywheres. The little creetur she dropped off'n a sea and jest fetched one dod-blasted clip, but never once stopped goin', and we made out to git her in home here someways. Come to find out, she 'd started her stern-post quite bad, and stove the keel to flinders chock aft, so 's Ephe he had to put her on the blocks for repairs, and then, thinks I, bedide ef I don't try a trip or two into one o' them timber ships they was all telling about so much.

"I took and put her for Quebec, and run afoul of this 'ere ship the fust thing, all loaded and most ready to sail, she was. Quick 's ever I see her I knowed she was Yankee-built fast enough, though there 't was painted on her stern plain 's daylight, 'Falls of Ettrick, Sunderland;' but come to once git aboard, and 't wa'n't only a short time 'fore I 'd bated dollars to doughnuts she was the ole Gertrude Spurshoe. They 'd turned to and changed her over into full ship rig, and painted her all up diff'rent, and besides that she was nigh buried out o' sight un'neath a tormented great deckload of deals; but still there was quite a few things I twigged pooty quick, so 's there wa'n't no doubt in my mind but what she was the ole Gerty for sure.

"There wa'n't ary one of the crew knowed the fust blame' thing about her, mind ye, but soon 's ever the chance showed up, I took and sounded the mate on the subjic', and he 'lowed right off 't was jest how I thought.

"Wal, o' course I was nach'ally kind of pleased like to git aboard the ole packet ag'in so fashion, being 's how I see her built and launched, and had made r'ally my fust deep-water v'yage into her, let alone bein' so ter'ble well acquainted along o' ole Cap'n Spurshoe ever sence I knowed enough to go. And besides all that, 's I say, she was a grand good, dry, comfort'ble ole creetur to go into, take it most any kind of chance, but ye see it did appear so sort of sing'lar like the way I 'd fell in along on her ag'in, that 't was nach'al I should make some consid'ble amount of talk about it forrard there amongst the rest-part o' the crew.

"They was a tol'ble clever class o' fellers that trip, take 'em by and large, but there was one hard-looking ticket amongst 'em that come aboard crazy drunk, and kep' so long after everybody else had sobered off. When he did fin'lly git hisself straightened out, he turned to in good shape, and 'peared to be a proper sailor man, but still there was allus suppn' about the cut o' the feller's jib I could n't go nohow. Seems 's though he wa'n't

the leastways anxious to chum in 'long of nobody, and it 's dinged sure nobody did n't hanker for no truck 'long of him. To look at the cuss, nine out o' ten would sot him down for a reg'lar-built Dago, without no efs nor ands about it, but the steward he 'lowed the feller had shipped under the name o' McLaren, and had give out how he was a Novy Scoshy Scotchman. Anyways, McLaren is how he was called aboard the vessel, though most any pore fool would known that wa'n't his right name, not by a jugful.

" Wal, as I was sayin', I 'd been in the way o' making more or less talk about this 'ere ship Falls of Ettrick being the ole Yankee barque Gerty Spurshoe, but this yaller-mugged Portogee Novy Scoshyman he seldom ever sot round 'long o' the rest-part on us, without 't was jest to bolt his grub same 's a dog, and git out ag'in, so seems 's though he 'd never heern none of this talk till one time it come round that somebody happened to blart it right out afore him about my being a towny of ole Cap'n Spurshoe's, and goin' into the vessel when she was a Yankee barque, in room o' being an English timber drogher.

" Wal, sir, that blame' Dago he sot there shoveling down his vittles jest scand'lous, same 's usual, but quick 's ever he heern this talk he sort of

choked up like, and bedide now, ef he did n't jest turn some consid'ble white round the gills! The cuss tried his dingdest to pass it off, though, but I took good notice he was all of a tremble the whole length on him, and after this 'ere, seems 's though he acted even queerer 'n what ever he had afore. He 'd allus try to sneak off all soul alone by hisself ef 't was anyways so 's he could work it, and come to that, his actions the whole time was for all the world same 's though he cal'lated folks was allus a-watchin' and huntin' of him like.

"But I know I ketched him time and ag'in giving me his ugly black looks, jest eggsac'ly same 's though he was fairly itchin' for a chance to knife me in the back, ye know, and 't wa'n't jest only me that twigged it neither, for ole steward he come one time and gimme warning to allus keep a good sharp eye to wind'ard for that feller. Ole steward he 'lowed how he 'd been shipmates 'long o' them Dagoes so 's to know 'em root and branch — a bloody sight better 'n what he wanted to, s' he; and he 'lowed this one had a bad gredge ag'in' me for suppn' or other, though what under the living canopy he was down on me for in pertikler I could n't noways make out to fathom. I never so much as even see him that I knowed on afore coming aboard the ship, and sence then, I 'd took

oath him and me had n't had no kind of truck together one way or t' other.

"Come to keep turning of it over, though, I could n't seem to rec'lect seeing of him gimme none o' them cut-throat looks of his'n till after the time he overheern the talk about my being acquainted 'long o' the vessel the way I was. Wal, I bothered my head some consid'ble little for a spell tryin' to put this and that together, but I could n't never appear to make no great sight o' headway.

"'T was plain enough that finding out that night about the ship 's being the ole Gertrude was the biggest kind o' s'prise-party to him, and 't was jest so plain he did n't love me none the better for claimin' to know so much about her. Them two things I could see all clear enough, but whenever I 'd git that fur, I 'd be sure to fetch up all standing, and so bimeby the thing pooty much dropped out of mind altogether.

"Mister Dago he kep' on skulkin' round same 's ever, but never once opened his face to me, nor to nobody else, for that matter, and we 'd made out to wiggle the ole craft somewheres nigh half acrost the big pond, when along in the aft'noon one day she up and shet in thick o' fog on us ; and cf ever she *was* thick o' fog, that 'ere was the time, too, — one of them proper ole black, dreepin' fogs,

ye know, jest as thick 's so much ma'sh mud, so 's you could n't begin to see nowheres nigh the length o' the vessel. 'T would bunch up in great big drops on every nameable thing you 'd lay hand to, and I rec'lect plain as can be the stiddy dreepin', dreepin', it kep' up off'n the spars and rigging, same 's so much rain in the summer time.

" And soon 's ever it come night-time, wal, bedide now, but did n't it everlastingly make out to be some black, though! It could n't been no blacker 'n what it was that night, noways they could rigged it, — jest only a reg'lar out and out dungeon o' fog it was, that would soak up a light so 's thirty foot off you 'd scursely know she was lit at all!

" The ole man, I know, he was chock full of trouble, frettin' and stewin' around, him and the mate together, about keeping an extry sharp lookout there forrard, and all that, though Lord knows for all the good a lookout was sich a chance as that, he might full better be turned in with a blanket hauled over his head. What mod'rit little air o' wind there was that day had been out here to the south'ard and east'ard, but she kep' petering out after sundown, and I know when it come our watch there wa'n't so much as a breath from nowheres, — jest a perfec' stark dead calm she was, so 's the

ship had lost every mite of steerageway, and fell off in the trough o' the sea.

"There was one o' them long-drawed ole seas a-running, so 's the creetur she jest laid there wallering right in the trough, a-rollin' and rollin' away, oh, ter'ble slow and lonesome like, with the sails aloft givin' out little easy flaps every time she fetched up, and sending down a spatter of them big drops atop o' the deckload.

"Wal, I was standing somewheres about 'midships, I know, and this 'ere Novy Scoshy Dago, it was his trick at the wheel, ye un'stand. The second mate he was aft there too, somewheres, and the rest part o' the watch was scattered round one place and another. There did n't appear to be ary man on deck talkin' a word, neither. Someways it made out to be so cussed still and black that night, seems 's though all our tails was sort o' down like, though prob'ly nobody would n't owned up to it then.

"All to once, whacko! there come the ongodliest ole thump right on deck chock aft there, so 's the ship jarred the whole length on her, and most the very same secont that set-fired Dago let go a screech outen him, I swan, fit to turn the blood cold in your veins!

"Then the secont mate he up and commenced

yellin' somebody had fell from aloft, and all hands on us made a break aft. The ole man he turned to and fetched a light outen the cabin quick 's ever he could, and sir, laying right there on the quarter-deck, jest forrard o' the wheel, betwixt it and the after end of the house, was a heap of suppn' dressed in oilskins, and a big pool o' blood dreeblin' out from un'neath on 't!"

"Sho, you!" exclaimed Asa Fairway.

"Gospil-truth," said the old man. "McLaren he 'd fell forrard acrost his wheel in a dead faint, with his arms hanging down limp and swingin' every time the rudder kicked on a sea and give it a spoke or two one way or t' other. Seems 's ef I could see him there this minute, doubled over the wheel that way for all the world same 's ef he was stoopin' down so 's to git a close squint at this 'ere thing on deck in front on him! Wal now, you, ef there wa'n't the devil's own shindy aboard that ship! The ole man he took his lamp right off and tried to find out who it was that had fell, though so fur 's known, there wa'n't nobody aloft anyways; no airthly call for it, ye know. They took and kind o' straightened the thing out so 's to git a look at the face on 't, and we all see he was a big black-looking devil, but sir, there wa'n't ary soul aboard knowed who 't was, not ef they was to swing for it!"

"Wal, I 'll be jiggered," cried Skipper Asa. "Wa'n't none o' your folks missing nor nothin'?"

"Nary one o' the ship's company wa'n't missing, that was a blame' sure thing, and you can bate them fellers commenced to git nerved up in good shape over the bus'niss! McLaren had been lugged below, and soon 's ever he come to hisself we tried to git suppn' outen him about it; but seems 's though the feller had flew right off'n his nut complete, and allst in the world he 'd do was to jabber away stiddy mostly in some dod-blasted outlandish lingo or other, and keep rollin' them big wild-lookin' eyes of his'n fit to beat creation.

"Wal, the boys all the time was gitting more and more worked up, ye see, and commencin' to take on the very wust way. Every mother's son on 'em 'lowed how the ole man had ought to turn to and heave the dod-blowed thing to hell overboard quick 's ever he could; but he kep' a-hanging back like, a-backin' and fillin', and trying to quiet 'em down someways. For one thing, I know he would have it the feller was a stowaway; but, setfire! he knowed better all the time 'n to talk sich stuff as that to us! The ship's hold was stowed chock-a-block full of lumber jest as solid as ever you could pack it, and there wa'n't no place else for ary living soul to take and hide hisself away for

a fortni't going on three weeks, same 's he must done. And 'lowin' there *was* some feller made out to stow hisself aboard, what in the name o' reason should possess him to turn to and go aloft a dirty black night same 's that was?

"No sir-ee, sir! The ole man he could n't make out to shove no sich guff 's that down our throats, not much he could n't! There wa'n't ary one on us cal'lated to turn in ag'in with that dev'lish thing in oilskins laying aboard the ship, and I guess ef the truth was known, both mates felt about the same 's we done. Anyways, they held a number of confabs along o' the ole man, and fin'lly seems 's though he come to see it wa'n't no good buckin' ag'in the whole on us, so-fashion.

"Bedide now, you! I won't un'take to say but what there 'd been a risin' aboard that hooker ef he had n't give in jest as he did. You take the common run of hands afore the mast, ye know, and they 'll most gin'ally put up with a sight o' crowding most ways, but sure 's ever you live now, I tell ye the ole man's head was level when he turned to and give us lief to take and heave the thing over the side that same night.

"But come to git right down to it, though everybody wanted to be red o' the hell-fired thing the wust ole way, still there wa'n't ary man into the

whole ship's company that darst to up and tech of it. The mate he tried orderin' and coaxin' this one and that one, but he could n't stir nobody to make ary move, when all to once be dinged ef that 'ere luny McLaren did n't fetch a spring up on deck and yells fit to stund ye like, 'I 've handled him once, and I can ag'in!' s' he.

"Wal, I 'll be jig—" essayed Skipper Fairway again, but uncle Rufus cut him short.

"They 'd pooty nigh stripped the feller naked, trying to fetch him to below there, ye know, and I 'm tellin' of ye he did look some desp'rate the time he give that tiger-leap and grappled along o' the thing on deck there! Up he picked it same 's ef 't wa'n't no heft at all, and whisked athwart-ship to the rail afore ever we 'd r'ally took it in, and was jest in the very act of ending of it up so 's to give it a header, when, true 's ever I 'm settin' here, that 'ere hell-fired thing fetched a twist, wropped two big long arms clean round McLaren, and the pair on 'em div' over the rail together! My soul and body, you, but that 's the honest truth, and jest as they done so, up come the dog-gonedest sounding laugh ever was heern yit, I 'll gu'rantee!"

"By the jumpin' Judas, you!" gasped Asa Fairway, his eyes protruding like those of a gigantic lobster. "That 'ere jest doos make out to —

wal, there, I 'll be everlastingly jiggered, swan to man ef I won't!"

"Wal, sir, then there was hell to pay and no pitch hot, now don't you go thinkin' there wa'n't!" continued uncle Rufus, not heeding the interruption. "The ole man and the mates was yelling to launch a bo't, and to heave 'em a cork-jacket, and to do this and that and I dunno what not, but now sure 's ever you live, there wa'n't none o' that crowd would step foot into no bo't, not that night they would n't! The old man he swore how McLaren had fell overboard, or else jumped over of his own accord; but there! we all see for ourselves jest how it was, and I cal'late there wa'n't ary man but what would n't stood keel-hauling sooner 'n took chances into a bo't after them two jest that pertikler night. There was a pair o' life preservers hove after 'em, and some of the crowd made out to pry over a stick or two o' timber from offen the deckload, though of course they only done it jest by way of saying they done *suppn*', for everybody knowed well nothin' in God's world would n't be no good.

"Wal, for a consid'ble spell there wa'n't much else talked aboard that packet, now I tell ye, but bimeby the thing kind o' blowed over like, same 's them things doos, ye know, in time. I left the

ship there to Liv'pool, and the very fust time I was to home here, I made it a p'int to jest go right up and see ole Cap'n Spurshoe. I 'd been mullin' of the thing over to myself pooty much all the time, ye see, trying to git the true bearings some ways or 'nother, so I took and walked up to the ole sir's place there, and put it to him plain and fair, was ever there ary cuttin' scrape, or great shakes of a row aboard the Gertrude after I 'd left her.

" 'No,' says the ole sir right away. 'No,' s' he, 'there never was no cuttin' nor no trouble at all, to speak on, without,' s' he, 'without it was the last trip ever I made into her,' s' he, 'there was a Portogee, or some sich outlandish-man, took a tumble from off'n the mizzen-tops'l yard one night, and killed hisself deado, and what 's more,' s' he, 'they allus mistrusted most damn'ly how there was foul play mixed up into it.' "

At this, Asa Fairway was once more moved to declare his expectation of being jiggered throughout all time, while the others also evinced a lively interest in various ways; but pausing merely to solemnly reassure them of his strict adherence to facts, uncle Rufus proceeded: —

" Seems 's though there was these two outlandishmen shipped aboard the Gertrude for the run to Havre from Mobile with cotton, — one big one, and

one kind o' mejum-sized feller. Seems 's though there was bad blood betwixt 'em from the fust, and the big one he was allus and forever picking on the other feller like, and thumpin' of him round, so 's the small one was heern more 'n once to make his threats how he 'd git a come-uppance someways.

"Seems 's though them two was aloft on the mizzen-tops'l yard this 'ere wet, dirty night, and some o' the boys was knowin' to it they 'd had an extry lively falling out that very same aft'noon. Wal, sir, the big one he fin'lly come down a-flyin' and struck the quarter-deck same 's a thousand o' brick, — killed hisself deader 'n forty herring, — and his pardner give out how the foot-rope had parted un'neath the pair on 'em, and how he like to have fell hisself; but, mind ye, every soul that see that piece of riggin' 'lowed how she had been cut clip and clean with a knife, in room o' parting, so 's they did n't make no bones about laying the job right plumb to this 'ere Dago, and got the cuss fairly skeered of his life afore ever they made port.

"Ole sir, there, he 'lowed how he was like to have clapped the feller in irons and give him up soon 's ever they got in, but seems 's though they was ter'ble short-handed that trip, so 's he kep' letting the thing go, and the bloody cut-throat made out to give 'em the slip afore ever the ship was docked

there to Havre. Ole sir he turned to that time I see him, and overhauled his chist of logbooks so 's to show me the exact entry where the big Dago was killed that way.

"So there you have the whole bus'niss complete. I could n't seem to read the thing jest right at the fust send-off, but same time I wa'n't so tormented numb but what I could see through a millstone quick 's ever the hole showed up good and plain."

VII

THE "WORKS" ON THE SCHOONER HARVESTER

On those somewhat rare occasions when a neighbor brought old Skipper Rufus Hulldown to the store in his sleigh during the winter, the latter took precedence over all others, and an armchair by the fire was at once vacated for him.

The stove door would then be closed, and the draughts turned on for a few moments; or likely enough Simeon would make a sudden blast with old paper and pine box-covers, which latter he broke up under foot so energetically that the crockery ware and bottles of medicine rattled again on their shelves.

It was on one of these visits that Skipper Job Gaskett was present with a long-bearded stranger whom he introduced to a favored few as his "woman's cousin from up back here a piece," and by way of entertainment to his guest soon urged old Skipper Rufus to again relate his memorable experience on board the schooner Harvester, — a story always eagerly listened to by all, but which

the old man could not always be induced to enter upon in so public a place.

Between him and Job Gaskett, however, there existed a strong bond of sympathy through their unwavering belief in the supernatural, and moreover, Job had the knack of drawing out the old man.

"It 's seldom ever I come down past them pore ole wracks up to the Head o' the Cove there," said he, "without it puts me in mind of the set-fired works you see aboard the ole Harvester that time, Skip' Rufe. And speaking of her, it does beat the ole Boy hisself the way that creetur makes out to hold her sheer all these years sence she died. Why, you, there 's quite a few o' them ole hookers up there pretty much all flattened out now, that was counted tol'ble good vessels the time you folks give up the Harvester, and now she 's by all odds the best-lookin' wrack of the whole kit on 'em!"

"Bedide ef you ain't got about the rights on 't!" cried Skipper Rufus, evidently pleased at this tribute to his old craft. "The ole Harvester was built for keeps. She wa'n't jest merely hove together same 's a good part on 'em is to-day, now I tell ye what! Wood and iron could n't be sot up stouter 'n what she was; and time we hauled

her up, I cal'late three hunnerd dollars would made a better vessel outen her than we could went to work and built."

"Wal, you folks *was* cal'lating to repair-up, wa'n't ye?" asked Job.

"'Course we was!" answered the old man. "Never had no idee o' giving of her up for good. Cal'lated to give her a new deck and wales, mebbe; but you see the thing of it was, there was sich an everlasting string of owners to her, we could n't git 'em to pull together noways. There was Elder Pike, he had his little piece into her; and them two ole maid sisters o' his'n, they had their little piece into her; and then there was two or three widder women there to the Neck, they 'd got into her, too.

"I can't tell ye now jest who they all was, but that 's the way the creetur had got to be cut up amongst 'em into thirty-seconts and sixty-fourths, chock to her timber-heads; so soon 's ever we commenced to talk repairin'-up, set-fire! you never see sich another pulling and hauling. Me and brother Ephe we held nigh onto a half on her betwixt us, and *we* knowed fast enough her top-sides was growin' to be consid'ble tender, but you could n't git them women-folks and that 'ere ole sky-pilot so 's they 'd talk reasonable, noways.

One day mebbe they'd all agree to repair-up; and next day they might be possessed to sell out the wust way, but you could n't git no price outen 'em to save ye; and so it kep' workin' till bimeby betwixt the lot the creetur' died right there where she was hauled up to, and a dod-blasted shame it was, too!"

"Jest merely heavin' away the ablest little hooker ever went out of this Cove," said Cap'n Roundturn. "I never will forgit the time we come out by Halibut P'int in company along o' you, into the old Mirandy. 'T was gitting along late in the fall o' the year, and screechin' here from the nor'west right out endways, so 's Ipswidge Bay was all feather-white fur 's ever you could see to wind'ard. I know we was kind of shaking the ole Mirandy through them flaws under her three lowers, but, blow my shirt, ef you did n't come walkin' down past us in that 'ere ole Harvester with a rap full, and wearing a stays'l at that!"

"Yas, yas!" chuckled Skipper Rufus. "I re-c'lect the time, well. Oh, she'd lug sail along with the best of 'em, the ole Harvester would. Me and brother Ephe had always knowed her for a dretful able, smart-goin' little packet ever sence she was launched, but it was only jest by way of

a slant that ever we come to hear she was for sale at sich a trade down there to Burnt-Coat. There was a rich ole feller by the name of McClintock that owned her and half a dezen sail besides down there to the islant, and fin'lly he went to work and died. Seems 's though his widder was possessed to be red on all the ole feller's vessel prop'ty quick 's ever she could. Seems 's though the Harvester had always been a very pertikler pet o' his'n, being as he 'd turned to and had her built out of jest sich stock, and jest to suit hisself everyways; so 's every soul there to Burnt-Coat 'lowed the ole feller sot a master store by her.

"Wal, me and Ephe we turned to and gafted onto her some consid'ble quick, soon 's ever we found what a trade she was, but same time we thought then it was ter'ble queer all them folks should stand by with their hands shoved in their pockets and see that schooner go out o' town at sich a figger. Vessels was good-paying prop'ty in them days, you know, and she was all took up here to the Cove inside of twenty-four hours' time; everybody that see her was carried away complete, and wanted to git holt on a piece, bad.

"About the middle of September that next fall, as nigh 's ever I rec'lect, we up and give it to her for Bay Shelore, a-mackerelin'. I know we made

the run from Mt. Desert Rock chock to Canso in less'n thirty-six hours; and the creetur' wa'n't in no trim to travel, neither; but you take and give her half a chance any time, and she was allus off same 's a scalt hog!

"But come to git down through the Gut o' Canso, and the wind kept petering out on us so 's by night-time we was jest up off'n the no'thern p'int of Prince Edward's Islant, there, with a mere air of wind out here to the east'ard, so 's I cal'lated to see it shet in thick o' fog most any minute, and that kind of kept me dodgin' on deck by spells all the fust part of the night."

"I want you should twig every blame' word o' this 'ere, Amis!" interrupted Job Gaskett, speaking to his "woman's cousin." "There never was nothin' truer 'n what this makes out to be, not sence Adam was a yearling."

"Along about midnight 't was," continued Skipper Rufus, "I took a turn forrard, and then I come aft ag'in, and stopped abreast o' the mainriggin' to light me up my pipe. Now 't wa'n't so very dark that night; one of them whitish, hazy style o' nights, ye know; so 's you could see everything tol'ble clear the length of the vessel easy enough. I know I see brother Ephe standin' aft there a-straddle o' the tiller, and cal'lated for sure

he was all the one there was on deck besides me. Bimeby I sot out to walk chock aft ag'in, but I could n't have took a couple of steps afore Ephe up and says, s' he, 'Who 's that turned out forrard there?' s' he to me.

"Wal, I s'posed of course it wa'n't nobody without it was some one of our own crowd had come on deck outen the fo'c's'le for sumpin or other, so I turned round as moderate 's ever you please, and bedide you! ef there wa'n't a ter'ble short, chunky-built feller standin' chock forrard there, leaning up ag'in' the windlass-bitt. Never appeared to be doing nothin' in pertikler; only jest leaning up there takin' his comfort, and looking dead away to loo'ard.

"'Wal,' 's I to brother Ephe, s' I, 'I dunno who 't is we 've got aboard sawed off as short as that feller makes out to be. How long 's he been there?' s' I.

"'I only jest this very secont see him,' says Ephe. 'I can't seem to place him neither,' s' he. 'What 's that he 's got his head wropped up into?' s' he.

"Bedide now, thinks I to myself, thinks I, 'this 'ere 's a grain sing'lar like, too,' so I jest up and hailed the feller: 'Hi there, forrard! what ye doing of there?' s' I. Never a yip come outen him,

though, nor we could n't see as he moved hand or foot, nary one.

" Wal, that 'ere kind of riled my blood, that did, and I started forrard to sort o' look into the thing a mite myself, for I commenced to think whether or no it wa'n't one o' them sleep-walkin' scrapes same 's we hear tell on ; but afore ever I got as fer 's the scuttle, I see blame well it wa'n't none of our crowd, not by no means. He was a dretful little short chunk of a feller ; reg'lar lumpfish build he was ; nigh as beamy as he was long over all. There was a big gray beard onto him, and he had on one o' them knitted jumpers, same 's we allus used to wear aboard vessel a sight in them days. The thing onto his head was a blame' big fur-cap, nigh 's ever I could tell, and I commenced b'iling inside right off to think some strange feller had made out to stow hisself away aboard on us so-fashion.

" ' Dod-blast your dirty pelt, you ! ' s' I, ' what the devil be you doing of here, anyways ? ' s' I.

" But he never opened his face, nor stirred in no way, shape, nor manner.

" ' We 'll damn quick see ef you 've got ary tongue into your gullet, you ! ' s' I, and I fetched a leap for him, cal'lating to ketch holt on his throat, and give him the very Jesse of a settin' up, mebbe ;

but true as ever you live, 't wa'n't only air that I grabbed, and I brung up solid ag'in' the windlass so 's to knock the wind clean outen me! So help me, that feller was gone quick 's ever you 'd snuff out a candle, and of all the tarnation ole feelin's ever I had, them that come acrost me that minute was the cussedest! Bedide ef I can't feel 'em yit! The buckram was all took outen me for a spell, so 's I had to set down on the coil o' cable there forrard till I come to a bit. Brother Ephe, soon 's ever he see me close in with the feller, he left his tiller and come runnin' forrard hell-bent, so 's the vessel come up into what little air there was going.

"Them main-sheet blocks fetched a couple o' slats acrost the traveler, and woke up one of the boys below, so 's he stuck his head outen the scuttle to see what was up, and Ephe he turned to and rigged up a yarn right off about how I was jest took awful sick like; for it would been as much 's the trip was wuth ef ever them fellers below had once got wind of there being sich works aboard. They 'd took their dunnage, o' course, and quit same 's so many rats, the very fust time ever we harbored anywheres, so 's Ephe and me we dassent even say boo to nobody, without 't was betwixt ourselves.

"Us two was consid'ble nerved up over the

blame' business; but Ephe he was allus called a cool star anyways, ye know, and it took a master sight to jar him any great, so fin'lly he come round to allow how ef the ole feller showed hisself ag'in, he cal'lated to have a hack at him on his own hook, ef it took a leg."

"Reg'lar-built dare divil, Ephe allus was, anyways," explained Skipper Gaskett to his guest.

"Wal," the old man went on, "we never see nothin' outen the common run till we was to anchor one night down to Bay Shelore, there. 'T was jest as pooty a night as ever growed, too; moon all out full tilt, shinin' away for every mite she was wuth, and jest a mod'rate little air o' wind drawring off'n the land, so 's you could smell them juniper woods ashore there good and plain. Yes, sir, and the smell of them kind of woods has allus give me a start from that day to this.

"Wal, along about daybreak, or jest afore, brother Ephe he come the fust thing ever I knowed, and commenced a-pokin' and rollin' of me in my bunk to git me woke up. Me and him and 'Lish Kentle up the crik here, we three was all the ones slept aft there, you un'stand; all the rest-part was forrard.

"'He 's out there on deck ag'in!' s' he in a whisper, so 's not to roust out 'Lish. 'I 'm going

to tackle the cuss jest once more ef it shims the whole trip!' s' he.

"Wal, fur's ever I was concerned, I would a blame' sight lieveser stopped jest where I was. That 'ere bunk was plenty good enough for me; for I 'd had all the truck I was looking for along o' the ole fur-cap feller; but Ephe he would have it I must turn out, whether or no. I rec'lect, though, my legs felt consid'ble wobbly un'neath of me when I was follerin' of him up that companion-way ladder. Jest as we was going up, Ephe he reached and grabbed holt of a hardwood stick about two foot long we used for barring to the scuttle-slide with; he gafted onto that billet o' wood, and slipped her inside his pants leg.

"Wal, sir, we got on deck, and I 'll be jiggered ef there did n't set that same ole sawed-off feller ag'in; setting chock aft on the taffrail he was this time, jest be-aft the house. The moon drawred right plumb onto him, so 's you could see the glint of his ole beard, and the whole look of his face most as plain as daytimes.

"Brother Ephe he never lost no time backin' and fillin' at all, but jest edged up along close a-nigh to him and says, s' he, 'Mod'rate kind o' night this, neighbor,' s' he.

"The ole feller never once give him so much as

a look, and Ephe he up and says ag'in louder, 'What ails ye, Cap'n, anyways? Be ye stone-deef, or luny, or what in tunkett is it the matter of ye?' 's he.

"Never a yip nor a move come outen the feller; you might jest as soon spoke to the mainmast, eggsac'ly.

"'Now then you, squire,' s' Ephe, quite earnest like, 'I cal'late to know who and what you be afore ever I git through with ye, and you better a damn sight put that in your pipe and smoke it fust as last! Ef you ain't cal'lating to act kind o' half decent when you 're spoke to civil, blame' ef I don't try and club a grain o' manners into ye!'

"And quicker 'n scat he up and fetched a lingin' ole clip at the feller's head with that 'ere hardwood billet.

"Wal, sir, that stick o' wood never brought up ag'in nothin, — jest plain nothin'. She flipped outen brother Ephe's hand and went spinning off through the air towards Novy Scoshy, the last ever we see on her, but there wa'n't nothin' to that feller with the fur-cap, no more 'n there was the time I run afoul on him; and Ephe he jest says, kind o' choky like, 'That settles it!' s' he, and down below we tumbled and turned in ag'in blame' lively without another word spoke; but I took no-

tice brother Ephe he wa'n't never sighted on deck next day till past noon-time."

"Wa'n't there a mess on 't!" cried Job Gaskett. "How 'd ye love to been shipmates along o' that ole sir, Amis?" said he, turning to his friend. "Sooner stop up home there with both feet good and solid on the turf, would n't ye?"

"Gracious evers!" exclaimed the man "from up back here." "I never see the salt water but once afore to-day, and I guess I 'll take and stop ashore a spell longer yit. It 's no wonder you give up that schooner, Capting."

"'T wa'n't on that account we give her up, you!" said Skipper Rufus, somewhat indignantly. "We made out to run her twenty odd seasons after this 'ere, and fin'lly come to reckon the ole feller good 's ef she was insured on complete! You jest wait a spell and see how the thing worked!

"After this last scrape, seems 's ef he sort of took the hint that he wa'n't wanted round aboard no great" —

"Tol'ble good reason he had, too, for feelin' a grain sideways toward ye, Skip'!" interrupted Job Gaskett. "Ef he 'd been some folks he 'd owed ye a gredge after you two chokin' and clubbin' of him that way!"

"Wal, seem 's though he did n't bear us no

great of a grudge," said Skipper Rufus, "for in room o' that he turned to and done us the biggest kind of a good turn that trip — ye know. Things got simmered down into the same ole rut in a few days, but we could n't seem to strike fish into Bay Shelore, there, and fin'lly I poked her acrost to the Magdaleens; but there wa'n't no sight there neither; so I let her go chock down into the bight o' Prince Edward's Islant, and there we struck 'em solid. Had as much as ever we could jump to a-saving them big number one mack'rel as fast 's we ketched 'em, so 's 't wa'n't long afore we was countin' up the days 't would be afore we 'd have her nose p'inted to the west'ard ag'in; that is, allowing the weather held good, same 's she was.

"One mornin', though, when we did n't lack but a couple o' days' fishin' to wet down all our salt, she commenced a-herming up thick and nasty here to loo'ard, and my camphire bottle she commenced a-rilin' up in good shape. I rec'lect by night-time that ole bottle was jest chock-a-block full of blame' big feathers, and streamers, and burgees like. Oh, you never see sich another lookin' mess on 't as that bottle was into, come sundown, so 's we did n't feel over and above easy at being so fur down to loo'ard into that 'ere bight.

"By good fair rights, we had n't no business into

the bay at all so late in the year. Our folks allus cal'lated to git outen the place all clear by the last of October, and here she was going on the secont week o' November. Ye rec'lect the bight is the very wust corner of the whole bay to be ketched into with the wind anyways tough from the east-'ard, for there 's nary decent harbor to run for to loo'ard, ye see; so allst ever a man can do ef so be it he gits penned in down there with a heavy east'ly gale, is to crack on the muslin without no mercy, and drag his vessel out clear o' the land one ways or t' other, ef it 's a possible thing. Jest a plain question o' luggin' sail, or going plumb to hell — that 's all.

"Ef a man feels anyways certain he 's in for an east'ly breeze o' wind down there into that bight, it stands him in hand to git up and git outen it quick 's ever he can make out to; but the grand trouble is, vessels doos well fishing, mebbe, same 's we done, and they keep hangin' on, hangin' on, waiting to see what it 's going to amount to like, till fust thing ever they know, they 're ketched there into a reg'lar ole twister of a breeze, like 's not.

"Now this time we was there, we had three other American mack'rel-ketchers in comp'ny along on us; one vessel from down Plymouth ways; one

Marbleheader, and a feller I was some acquainted 'long on, into an ole trap called the Light of Home, — belonged up here to Castine. He laid jest a fair berth to loo'ard of us, and about sundown I up and hailed him; asked him what he cal'lated we was goin' to have for weather.

"'Oh,' s' he, 'guess this 'ere won't amount to nothin', without it 's a fog-mull, or a spatter o' rain, mebbe;' 'lowed how he was goin' to stop right there, anyways.

"Wal, things was lookin' kind o' duberous like, according to my way o' thinkin', and I did n't make much bones about saying so, neither, though I was jest as loath as the next man to clear out and leave them big mack'rel. We chawed it over amongst us for a spell, and fin'lly concluded to let her hang on where she was till morning, anyways, kind o' hopin' we 'd be able to have another try at them big number ones.

"There was jest a decent air o' wind goin' then from about east-no'theast; but she kept breezening on stiddy all the time, I took notice, and afore long, she shet in thick o' fog and rain. I was on deck, you un'stand; for I run away with the idee the weather was up to some blame' caper or other, and I could n't feel jest easy down below playing cards same 's all the rest-part was doin' of. Fin'lly,

thinks I, in room o' gitting wet, I 'll slip below and oil up; and jest as I shoved back the scuttle-slide, brother Ephe he poked his head up to have a look at the weather. The very secont he done so, there was a voice up and says as loud and plain 's can be, 'Make sail on her to-night, and quick!' It was dark 's a pocket, so 's we could n't see the fust thing, but both on us heerd the voice right close aboard on us, and knowed blame' well who it was back on her, too!

"We took and give out to the rest-part how I 'd seen a forerunner, for o' course it would n't do to tell 'em jest the state of the case; and ef ever you see quick work gitting ary vessel under way, that was the time.

"The Castine feller into the ole Light o' Home, he heerd our blocks a-talkin' out where we was making sail, and sung out to know what in the name o' reason ailed us.

"I told him we was in for a big breeze o' wind, sure, and how I cal'lated to make a lee somewheres, ef I had to go chock round to loo'ard of the islant to find it; told him he best up anchor and foller suit ef he knowed when he was well off. But the pore devil only got off some slang about us being skeered of a little fog; so we filled away, and left him and them two others to anchor.

"Wal, sir, that breeze had kept prickin' on, and prickin' on stiddy, so 's there was nigh a wholesale breeze already. Them flaws kept striking nigher and nigher together, and every one had more heft into her 'n the last one. It could n't been over half an hour after our anchor was broke out afore that packet had all she 'd suffer to under her three lower sails. Now, I was dretful well acquainted down through that way in them days, and did n't cal'late ever to take back-water from no livin' man when it come to poking round in the fog by day or by night-times, ary one; but all that fretted me the most was for fear 't would overblow afore ever we could work out clear of the bight. We 'd got to claw to wind'ard out past East P'int or the No'th Cape, one o' the two, or else there 'd be hell to pay and no pitch hot, sure enough; so I jest socked it to the vessel the wust way till she commenced bailing water acrost her by the hockshead, but I would n't show her no favors at all, and kept her wearin' them three whole sails till I dassent resk the gear another secont. Fin'lly, though, it come to bear down on us so blame' hard, Lord, thinks I, this won't never do no longer!

"She was washin' herself clean fore and aft in them seas already, every dog-gone dive, so we

turned to and stuck single reefs in the mains'l fust. That eased her a grain for a spell, but we soon found that 'ere breeze o' wind was only jest commencing to take holt. 'T wa'n't half an hour more afore we was stickin' reefs into the fores'l, and to cut it short, by midnight we was tied down to balance-reefed mains'l, close-reefed fores'l, and the bunnet outen the jib! That 's how much sail the ole Harvester was wearin' about that time, and by spells 't was more 'n what she could wag to then in any decent shape; but our only squeak was to cart it onto her for every pound she was wuth, ef ever we cal'lated to drag her out by East P'int that night.

"I was consid'ble in hopes she 'd do it, though them wall-sided seas right plumb in the face was a ter'ble set-back to her; but still I was some in hopes she 'd make out to do it, when all of a sudden, bang! rip! slat! away blowed that balance-reefed mains'l clean outen the bolt-ropes, and then I guessed our fat was all into the fire, and no mistake! We had n't nothin' fit to bend in room o' the mains'l, and here she was with every inch of after sail stripped off'n her clip and clean, so 's she would n't p'int up nowheres, let alone clawin' to wind'ard out clear o' the land in the face of that hellish head-beat sea!"

"That 'ere," interrupted Skipper Job again, "that 'ere *was* clear hell, and no mistake! I'll bate your ole jaw dropped some quick when you see that mains'l go!"

"I would n't wonder a mite!" admitted Skipper Rufus. "I know, thinks I right off, 'guess, by fire! this means a fresh crop o' widders to Killick Cove fast enough;' but still I knowed well ef we could only once make out to git the creetur' round on t' other tack, we 'd have sea-room for a spell anyways, and p'inting the way she was then meant the name of every blame' soul aboard was mud, sure 's death and taxes!"

"Gin'ral Jackson, you, yas!" exclaimed Simeon, hastily pulling off his spectacles. "Tracadie would fetched ye up all standin', spite of fate!"

"She 'd laid her bones to loo'ard o' Tracadie, according to the best we could head," said the old man. "I knowed that well enough, and so we took chances o' wearin' round on the other tack; 's nasty, resky a job as ever was, too, but the ole Harvester was a hard one to drownd, now I tell ye. Some on 'em made out to git the jib off'n her quick 's ever we 'd wore, and there we was hove to under close-reefed fores'l; not much bigger 'n ary tablecloth, anyways, but there! come to talk about carryin' sail! Don't say no more! In ten min-

utes' time after we 'd wore ship, she would n't carry plain *nothin'!* I never in all my going ever see the likes o' that for blowin' like a man right out endways! Why, sir, she would n't even so much as stand up and look at it, but jest laid right down flat out on her broadside most hatches to the water, and trembled same 's a leaf!

"And God knows that ole schooner was able, too, — jest as able 's ever they make 'em! Godfrey mighty, you! when that creetur' would n't stand up to it and take her med'cine like a major, them that would was some scatterin', now I tell ye! But this 'ere breeze o' wind was sumpin' clean away outen the common run; she was a proper harricane, that 's what she was, and no living man ever could stand up and face her for a secont!"

"We don't appear to git many of them kind o' reg'lar ole-fashioned combustibles at this day o' the world, someways," observed Skipper Job Gaskett, as the old man paused to refresh himself with a new quid of tobacco.

"That 's a fact!" assented Cap'n Roundturn. "It 's seldom ever we git a breeze at all now'days, let alone one of them ole hell-rippers, same 's we used to git."

"We dunno what a breeze o' wind is like, now'days," resumed Skipper Rufus decisively. "But as I

was saying of, our fores'l was most brand, spangin' new, and the rest-part of the gear was good, too, without 't was the mains'l; but we was all looking every minute for some blame' thing to carry away and disenable her so 's she 'd fall off to loo'ard, and dump the whole business down on them Cascumpegue sand-bars there; for when them wust flaws would jump on her that way, swan to man, ef it did n't seem more 'n what wood and iron could stand! She 'd kind of lay down lower, a-scrouching under 'em, though, till she 'd appear to git breath enough to stand up a grain, and buck into it ag'in. Blowed ef I did n't fairly feel sorry for the ereetur', seems 's though she was tryin' so hard to keep atop o' water!

"However, the way it turned out, she wa'n't spoke for, — not that breeze o' wind. It eased up on us a bit in a couple of hours' time, and along towards morning canted a p'int or two further to the east'ard, and that, of course, favored us more 'n a little; so 's the amount of the story was, when that gale o' wind fin'lly let go, we was all of ten mile to wind'ard of Miscoe! Yas sir, that 's a fact, and you can turn to and figure out for yourselves about how much leeway the creetur could have made! Why, good gorry, you! she must have eat to wind'ard ef anything that night, when there

wa'n't one craft in a hunnerd but what would have slid off to loo'ard same 's a blame' crab ! "

" Oh, she was a proper, long-legged, off-shore style of vessel, she was! " said Skipper Job. " But that was a weeked breeze of wind, according to all tell. That was when they lost the ole Bunny Visty, wa'n't it ? "

" Yas," replied Skipper Rufus. " Old man Spurshoe piled her up on the Magdaleens that night, and lost her whole crowd ; every soul on 'em belongin' here to the Cove, too. Come to that, there was eight more of our 'Merican mack'rel ketchers went ashore betwixt Bay Shelore and East P'int that time, not counting them three we left to anchor there in the bight. Seems 's ef them three must cal'lated to ride her out to anchor where they was, for I heern tell afterwards how the wrackage from' em was fairly hove up in windrows on shore dead to loo'ard."

" Them pore devils hung it out too long," said Job, " and paid dear for it, too, but I 'm thinking the ole feller never started you folks out none too soon yourselves ! Turn to now, Skip' Rufe, and give us the rest-part o' the yarn. I would n't have Amis here miss hearing this kind of after-clap, not for a farm down-east ! "

" Wal, then," began the old man again, " quick

's ever that breeze o' wind give up, we kept her off, and let her go a-fluking down through Northumberland Strait into Shediac so 's to git things kind of titrivated into shape ag'in afore we give it to her to the west'ard. There was half a dezen sail o' vessels dragged ashore right there to that harbor, and coming down along shore we see more wracks everywheres 'n what you could shake a stick to.

" Wal, when we was fin'lly makin' the run home, we 'd got up along so 's to sight Isle o' Holt all good and plain, and we took one of these 'ere smoky sou'westers right plumb in the teeth. I let her slam into it endways for a spell, but fin'lly, bedide, thinks I, what sense is they to this, anyways? I jest down hellum, and made a harbor afore noontime there to Burnt-Coat, Swan's Islant; the very same place we 'd bought the vessel to in the spring, ye rec'lect.

" Wal, soon 's ever we 'd got things all snugged up aboard in good shape, me and brother Ephe we took a dory and rowed ashore to the settlement, by way o' killing time like. There was an ole feller kept the store and post-office there to the w'arft, and seems 's though he knowed our vessel quick 's ever she poked her nose in past the light. We set there talking along o' him a spell, and seems 's ef

he was extry anxious someways to hear what about her; how we 'd made it into her so fur; and a sight o' questions the ole feller put to us that time, till, all to once, he up and says right out, 'Cap'n,' s' he to me, 'I know 't ain't the fust dinged mite of my business,' s' he, 'but,' s' he, 'I should r'ally like to ask of ye ef ever you see ary works outen the common run sence you 've been going into that 'ere schooner?'

"Whew!" whistled the man from "up back here," softly. Skipper Job delivered a resounding slap upon his thigh, and removed the pipe from his mouth to speak; but Skipper Rufus continued:

"Yas sir-ee! Them 's his very words! Wal, quick 's ever he up and talked that way, Ephe and me commenced to git the loom o' the land right away, and fin'lly we turned to and give the ole feller the whole history of the business, so fur 's ever we knowed it; and come to take and pump *him* a grain, he give us to un'stand how there was any grists o' folks right there to Burnt-Coat harbor that swore up and down they see ole 'Shorty' McClintock, — seems 's ef that was a nickname like o' his'n, — them folks was ready to make affidavy how they see him a-standin' anchor-watch all soul alone aboard the Harvester by night-times, while she was laying there to the harbor, inside a fortni't

after he 'd been planted six foot un'neath the sod up back of the meetin'-house there ; and it was jest sich works that sp'iled the sale on her all down through them parts.

"Now," the Skipper went on, raising his voice as some of his hearers again threatened to interrupt, "now, according to all tell down there to Burnt-Coat, 't was ole man McClintock we see ourselves twice aboard the vessel that trip, and 't was ole man McClintock that up and give us warning to git outen the bight o' the islant that night!

"Ef it wa'n't him, who in the name o' Sam Hyde was it? You jest turn to and tell — some of you knowin' ones!"

VIII

RUSTICATORS AT THE COVE

One wild January night a furious northeaster drove the fine snow in curling drifts across the narrow road leading to the store. The three great elms in front swayed and creaked in the heavy gusts, between which the dismal moan of the steam fog horn on the Neck was dimly heard mingling with the rote of the sea on that exposed headland. In the Cove the riding-lights of half a dozen coasters at anchor blinked feebly through the driving snow, rising and falling on the long ground swell which worked in from outside, and to a small but select assemblage the red-hot stove and tobacco laden air of the store seemed doubly grateful.

"This 'ere breeze o' wind is pricking on consid'-ble tough, you," remarked Cap'n Roundturn, as he unbuckled his overshoes and settled back comfortably in his chair. "Ef the sea keeps on a-makin' same 's she has sence noontime, 't would n't s'prise me no great ef some of these lumber-loaded fellers out here did n't pile up on the beach afore ever we 're through with it."

"Wal, I dunno about that, now," said Simeon dubiously. "I could n't make out to sight ary vessel outside in that 'ere glinn we had jest afore sundown, and what few there is to anchor in here to-night is all right enough, without this wind should cant to the east'ard furder, and give us a reg'lar-built ole-fashioned combustible. I don't look to see nothin' come ashore, though, myself. Vessels all carries sich tormented heavy ground-taycle now'days to what they used to, we never commence to git the wracks there was thirty year ago."

"Would n't kick a mite to see a little cargo of stove-coal delivered up here on the rocks good and handy about this time o' year, though," remarked Sheriff Isaac Windseye, cheerfully. "My ole coal-bin is gitting to look kind of sick a'ready. Dinged ef these flaws ain't strikin' heftier every minute, you!" he exclaimed, as a fierce blast drove the snow like sand against the eastern windows.

"You bate they be so," assented Simeon. "It 's been breezenin' on stiddy now ever sence noon-time. I told my woman last night, s' I, 'We 're in for a linging ole east'ly breeze o' wind,' s' I. It 's seldom ever I heerd the rote out on them southeast laidges plainer 'n what she was last night, and take it one spell there, and, swan to man! ef

't did n't seem 's though them breakers on the Hue and Cry was right down here back of the salt-shed! Wonder what them summer rusticators would say ef they should light down here this weather. S'pose they 'd turn to and be rowin' acrost from Skipper's Islant to-night bare-armed and bare-headed same 's ever?"

"Godfrey mighty, you!" cried Job Gaskett, in response to Simeon's ironical inquiry. "'T would n't s'prise me one mite to see 'em tryin' of it on. No, sir, 't would n't, — not a part'cle! I tell ye them folks doos make out to act so like a parcel of nat'rals when they 're down here summer-times, that nothin' they turned to and done would n't jar me none now. Why, I seen some on 'em one day here last fall, when 't was raining consid'ble smart, thick o' fog, and a fresh breeze a-goin' from out here to the south'ard and east'ard, damp and cold 's the devil, — there they was, the pore half-fools, rowin' round and round the Cove into one o' them hotel let-bo'ts, nary head-gear onto 'em, and stripped chock to the waist, they was, trying to git their-selves tanned, I cal'late!

"Oh, them 's a ter'ble cur'ous class of folks, them rusticators is, now I 'll be jiggered ef they hain't! But lemme tell ye one thing, and that is, you come to take them kind that goes round

a-sketchin' and drawrin' out these 'ere portograft views, I cal'late them kind 's the biggest cranks o' the whole kerboodle. One time I seen three o' them kind to once setting down drawrin' out a portograft view of that set-fired ramshackle ole wrack of a house Jim Whidden lives into, 'way down on the lower Neck ro'd, there. Why, gracious ever, you, I 'll bate high there ain't a flake o' paint left on to the blame' ole trap, nor there hain't been sence my rec'lection, and seems 's though I could 'member chock back to the Concord fight, too!

"Would n't wonder myself but what she was built about the time Columbus come ashore up there to Plymouth, but that 's jest the very place them rusticators had turned to and gafted onto to sketch out a portograft view on, much as to say, 'This here is the very pootiest-lookin' place we can make out to scare up to the whole o' Killick Cove!' Sich works is a reg'lar dod-blowed slur on the town, and that 's allst ever you can make on 'em.

"I know blame' well we haint got no gilted palaces, and all them kind o' krawm to make no great brags on, but same time there doos make out to be quite a few real slick and tidy little places here to this Cove, jest as handsome and neat kep' up as

ary one ever you 'll find up to the west'ard, back o' Baws'n there. Why, I 'll un'take to take and name off half a dezen places this minute that 's all painted up and blinded off pooty 's ary pictur' ever you see, a set of out-buildin's and everything complete. But set-fire, you! What 's them kind amount to, anyways? Them kind hain't no sort of airthly account to them blame' rusticators!

"The way it works, they 've allus and forever got to run afoul o' some ole lop-sided wrack of a house, or else a bo't, or a w'arft; dinged little odds I guess, what she is, long 's she makes out to be some reg'lar ole has-been, that hain't seen no paint nor fixin' up not sence Adam wa'n't nothin' only a yearling; and then, 'Oh my!' says they right off, 'but hain't that jest lovely, you!' That makes 'em grin right out, same 's so many set-fired Chessy cats, that doos. They got to take and heave to then, sure pop, and sketch her all out full bigness, complete, so 's to take and lug her off home 'long on 'em.

"Why, Godfrey mighty, you! Ef you 'll b'lieve it, ole Sam Grommet there, he told me hisself one o' them same rusticators turned to one time and drawed out a portograft view of him a-standin' there full bigness into his ole dory with a master great jag o' lopster traps stacked up all o' four foot

high, — yas, he did so, that 's a fact, — and give him an even dollar for his stopping, too! Must made a reg'lar jim-dandy style o' pictur' to take and stick up into a gilted frame, somewheres, now I swanny!

"That plaguey old dory o' his'n come outen the Pilot's Pride, ef I ain't very much mistakened, and it 's going on a dezen year sence she was lost, I know, and prob'ly she wa'n't by no means a brand, spangin' noo dory then, neither. Sam he ain't never teched her sence, I guess, in no way, shape, nor manner, without it is to kind o' chinse up her garboards a grain with pieces ripped off'n his shirt-flap; and I 'm tellin' of ye she 's about as desp'rate-looking an ole packet now as you 'll scare up in a month o' Sundays.

"For the matter of that, though, you come to take ole Sam there, and there don't make out to be nothin' so very beautysome about him, neither, specially when he 's all ragged out in his ole oil-skins and kag-boots, same 's he most allus is, and chock-a-block full o' noo rum at that! And dirty! Wal now, don't say a word! I 'll bate he can't remember so fur back as the time he shifted his shirt last, or washed his face and hands, nary one. Seems 's though he allus doos make out to be one of the very lookin'est ole creeturs ever you see, but

there, you! Seems 's though he jest suited them rusticator folks right chock up to the handle, and I cal'late myself he 's liable to git adopted by some on 'em yit, so 's they can allus have him round handy to set and look at to home."

While in general the company present seemed greatly to enjoy this discussion of the rusticators' failings, Sheriff Isaac Windseye, who had recently fitted up his house for their accommodation, took no part in it, but having fashioned a toothpick from a burnt match, sat tilted far back in his chair, using the implement in moody silence.

But Cap'n Simeon Roundturn, who was well known to entertain a supreme contempt for the peculiar class of people in question, now vacated his high perch at the desk, and with spectacles pushed down to the tip of his nose, advanced into the arena.

"The very fust year after them kind of folks struck here to this Cove," began he, "I turned to and laid me in a prime, A No. 1 stock of these 'ere canned goods; not jest merely tomatoes and the like o' them, but real downright fancy lot of canned chicken, canned puddin', blueb'ries, blackb'ries, lopsters and clams, and most every blame' thing else I figgered them style folks would prob'ly be callin' for. Wal, sir, wha' 'd I git for my pains?

There them cans set to-day, the heft on 'em, up there on them top back shelves." And Simeon turned and surveyed his slighted goods with a look of sorrow and indignation.

"I 've eat some few scatterin' cans in my own fam'ly," he went on, "and we 'll say mebbe I 've turned to and give away p'haps half a dezen or so cans all told, but set-fire, you! I hain't never got red of one single, sol'tary can outen the lot to a rusticator yit, nor I don't cal'late ever I shall, now. All the way ever I can figger it, I 've jest went and made me a clean loss on the whole tormented bus'niss. It 's only seldom ever one o' the tribe 'll so much 's set foot inside here at all now'days, and when they do it 's jest only to gawk round like, or else take and call for suppn' they know plaguey well I ain't got.

"Now you come to take it here last summer one time; that 'ere little red-headed galoot from Phullydelphy there, — the one that 's built them set-fired homely-lookin' barracks down on the ole Spurshoe place, you know, — he come sailin' in here with his short pants, bigger 'n Billy-be-damned. Blow my shirt ef he did n't tread up to the counter here same 's a chicken doos to a dough-dish, and 'lowed how he wanted some Mocho coffee.

"'I hain't got her,' s' I. 'Don't never have no call for her, scursely,' s' I.

"'Got any Jayvy, have ye?' s' he.

"'No,' s' I. ''Pear to be all cleaned out o' Jayvy jest this minute.'

"'Wal, what have you got in the way of coffee?' s' he.

"'Wal, you,' s' I, 'I got some bang-up ole Rio here, good 's ever you 'll scare up in the State o' Maine, 'twixt here and Quoddy Head.'

"But devil, no, no, that would n't never go nohow. That wa'n't nigh costly enough for him, and outdoors he stomped ag'in. Said he was 'fraid his folks would n't take to Rio jest rightly; but it 's my honest opinion he did n't actilly know nothin' about Rio coffee; like 's not never had once give her a good try in his life. When you take and come right down to the fine thing, it 's ter'ble little them folks doos appear to know any great sight about, and jest how under the canopy ever they git a livin' at all is suppn' I can't noways fathom.

"P'haps they may be counted dretful big herbs up 'round where they come from, but set-fire! I cal'late honest now, you turn to and plant one on 'em down here somewheres, and it 's a chance ef he wa'n't on the town inside o' six months!"

"I kin tell you, sir, jest how 't is with them style of folks," put in Cap'n Zenas Roundturn, raising his great forefinger impressively. "The big bulk of these here rusticators could n't never make out to git their own livin's, noways they could rig it. The thing is, some o' the ole ancient seed-folks was smart enough to acquire consid'ble prop'ty, we 'll say, and now all these here creetur's is able to do at this day o' the world is jest only to stand by to heave it away foolish; anyways, most, so 's to be red on 't clip and clean jest as fast 's ever they kin make out. The heft o' these here rusticator folks is more or less lackin' and soft-baked like; anybody that 's had truck 'long on 'em kin see that the very fust lick. They 'd ought to been turned once more into the oven afore ever they was hauled out; that 's my idee of what ails the most on 'em.

"But then there 's another class of rusticators that works it on a dif'rent plan like," continued the Cap'n. "You come to take the gin'ral run o' them kind that puts up to these here summer boardin'-houses in room of owning their own places, and I 'm knowin' to it for a fact that take it when they 're to home, they live same 's a cat doos un'neath of a barn!

"Yas, sir, that 's eggsac'ly how them kind is

apt to live to home. They 'll turn to and skin along jammed dretful close to the wind all winter, so 's to save up enough money to slide down here for mebbe a month or six weeks summer-times, and try to make our folks think they 're sunthin' r'ally quite a little extry-ord'nary, to be sure!"

"Dod-rot 'em! I make out to know 'em root and branch, from stem to starnpost, jest like a blame' book!" cried Cap'n Roundturn, regardless of mixed similitudes in his wrath at the thought of such gross imposition.

"Some on 'em drives hoss-cars and these here electuissic mortars when they 're to home, and damned tickled they be to strike the job, too; but soon 's ever they come to once git down here with a b'iled shirt and short pants onto 'em, why seems 's though nothin' ain't half good enough for 'em!"

After thus relieving his mind, Cap'n Roundturn paused, and glared about menacingly.

"Cal'late to take ary rusticator up there to your place this next summer, do ye, Zenis?" inquired Simeon, shortly.

"Oh wal, I would n't wonder no great, — I would n't wonder," answered the old man with an air of resignation. "Every fall reg'lar, soon 's ever we once git the house good and clear on 'em, I jest up and vum I won't never have no more

truck 'long on sich style folks, noways. It 's allus a plaguey nuisance having of 'em and all their dod-blowed parafarelly round under foot summer-times; but the thing on 't is, our women-folks makes out to git quite a little spendin'-money outen 'em fust and last, and I s'pose likely it 'll have to be jest as they say about it ag'in this spring, same 's 't is with ev'rything else."

IX

THE WRECK ISLAND RUCTIONS

Among the frequenters of Cap'n Simeon Roundturn's store on the wharf it was a time-honored pleasantry that the grimy-faced ship's clock over his high desk was regulated by Skipper Job Gaskett's appearance each evening at precisely six, and when, therefore, one winter night he arrived somewhat out of breath nearly an hour later, it was the occasion of no little remark.

Beside the usual company there were present the captain and two men from a small coaster wind-bound in the Cove, and fat old Squire Pelatiah Kentle from the Lower Neck, after his weekly paper in a mud-bedraggled wagon. Though still immensely stout, Squire Pelly had fallen away nearly a third in weight since the proud day when it required four picked men to get him on deck from his schooner's cabin, two invariably being left below to assist from the rear, while two others tugged from above.

"What you been driving at here to-night, any-

ways?" asked Job, after explaining his tardiness. "I s'pose likely Asy has fetched in some master trips o' fish from out here on Betty Moody's Gardin, same 's usual!"

"Godfrey mighty, you!" exclaimed Asa Fairway. "They 've been lopsterin' here to-night mostly, in room o' pulling trawls! You let Hacky Joe tell it, and Christmas day he sot a string of twenty cheap lath traps to Wrack Islant Eddy; left 'em be jest one day's time, and come to pull 'em, seems 's though he took seventy odd 'counters' and devil only knows how many dezen 'shorts' outen 'em!"

"You done complete, Joesy!" said Job. "Guess lopsters must be crawlin' ag'in some consid'ble lively! Where 'd you find bait to, this weather?"

"Oh, I sot a gill-net there to the Eddy," replied Hacky Joe, "and made out to scoop a bushel or two o' blue-backs. Tried torching of 'em two nights runnin', but the water fires so jest now they would n't rise to the torch."

"Wal," said Job, "I 'm proper glad you got a dollar out on 't, I 'm sure. 'T would take an ongodly ole school of blue-backs to toll me round Wrack Islant by night-times, though!"

"Why, neighbor, what ails Wrack Island?" asked the coaster captain. "I seen the time once

I was tickled enough to sight her, and let go an anchor there to the Eddy!"

"That might be!" returned Job. "So 've I, come to that, but I got my fill o' the tormented hole, all the same. Fur 's the anchorage goes, I got no fault to find, not ef a man wants to lay there in room o' coming furder inside, but I ain't got a mite of use for the rest-part of the islant. I 'd turn to and sink her to hell and gone in a minute ef only I was able!"

"Why, look a' here, neighbor!" said the captain, unbuttoning his yellow oilskin coat. "'Pears to me this here 's a little grain sing'lar, like! Now lemme take and tell ye, neighbor, jest how 't is with us three pore devils here. We 've been six weeks to a day from Machiasport to Gloshter with mack'rel bar'ls, and God knows without we git a shift o' wind, it 's liable to be another six 'fore ever we sight' Tit Manan Light ag'in! We seen a paper jest three times in the last month, and I 'll gu'rantee to reel off every word in them three by heart, advertisements and all! Ef so be it, neighbor, you 've got anything in the shape of a yarn about this island o' yourn, in the name of the fathers, turn to and give us it quick!"

Wreck Island, so abhorred by Skipper Job Gaskett, is a low reef of sad-colored granite on one

side of the entrance to Killick Cove, and about two miles distant from the village.

Between it and the mainland is a narrow strait crossed by a rocky bar nearly dry at low water. Here and there among the blanched and rounded ledges are a few short stretches of coarse shingle crowned with a fringe of rock-weed and sea-drift, while on the highest part a straggling growth of rank beach grass and thistles still holds in place a slight remnant of pale gravelly soil.

On the extreme southeastern point, far down at low-water mark, among the long brown kelps that writhe endlessly to and fro in the constant undertow, a few great barnacle-studded ribs of an ancient wreck rise obliquely from the water for a short time each day, but so rarely is the body of the vessel visible that Simeon was in the habit of recording its appearance on phenomenally low tides by a series of hieroglyphics on the inside of his ink-stained desk in the store, where his father before him had in like manner noted many important events.

Skipper Job Gaskett seldom needed urging to recount his numerous strange experiences, and on this occasion lost no time in complying with the visitor's urgent request.

"Wal, Capting What 's-yer-name," he began,

"I won't say it 's any great of a yarn I can give ye in regards to the islant, same time I jest soon 's not give ye it, sich as 't is, and what little I do give ye I cal'late to stand by. 'T ain't no manner o' cock and bull story, nor set-fired ole women's gossup-talk, this ain't, for the facts is all tol'ble well known here to this Cove.

"At the fust send-off, I 'll have to take and tell ye that I was borned and brung up jest across the Gut from Wrack Islant, on the main. That was allus the ole home-place right there, and I made the wust kind o' slip-up the time I let them tormented rusticators git holt of the prop'ty in room o' hanging on to it myself, but that ain't neither here nor there, as the ole feller says.

"Father he wa'n't seldom ever to home them days, and fin'lly him and his vessel was lost on Quero one master breeze they took down there in the fall o' the year.

"'Bout allst ever I rec'lect in regards to father anyways was the time he took and kind of explained like in regards to the tormented meters that about once in so often was sighted traveling round by night-times over the no'theast p'int o' the islant, there. Us small fry used to be skeered of them things soon 's ever they commenced to travel in good shape, and so father he goes to work one

time to quiet us down in regards to 'em, in room o' having us allus and forever be gittin' nerved up so fashion. 'Jobey,' s' he, one time, 'I want you should allus rec'lect them meters won't do ye no hurt ef only you take and leave alone of 'em. Don't ever long 's you live un'take to tech of 'em,' s' he, 'and you can bate high they won't trouble ye noways.' "

"Corposants, like, same 's we git aboard a vessel," suggested the visitor.

"I don't think, you!" replied Cap'n Job decidedly. "Meters, them was. I seen jest sich ructions up back o' the meetin'-house a dezen times sence. The ole sir had the rights on it fast 'nough. You could n't learn him nor mother, nary one, no great in regards to all them kind of things!"

"Set-fire, no! I'll be jiggered ef you could! Quick 's ever it come to sich-like works, the two on 'em was right to home!" declared Simeon, with enthusiasm.

"Most assuridly!" puffed Squire Pelly, magisterially, though, as usual, too much occupied with respiration for extended remarks.

"I'll tell ye, Capting," proceeded Job, "the why and wherefore of them same meters ain't noways fur to seek. Clean away back in them old ancient times jest after the war o' twelve, there

was a brig cast away there to the islant in the winter-time. Whatever was the name of that vessel, Simeon? She 's wrote down there somewheres."

Simeon here took a lamp, and opening his high desk, held the heavy cover up with his head while studying its time-darkened interior.

"Hannibal," said he at length. "Brig Hannibal of Castine come ashore on Thrumbcap — that 's the ole ancient name for the islant, ye know — February 20, 1815."

"That 's the feller!" resumed Job. "Hannibal. Blowing a livin' gale from the no'theast, and thick o' snow. The bulk on 'em was swep' off'n her and drownded right there, and the rest-part might full better been, for seems 's though they jest clim up on them rocks and froze afore daylight. Must suffered same 's so many blamed tholepins, I cal'late.

"All except three was fetched onto the main and buried by their folks down East, but seems 's though there was these three fellers that never showed up for a fortni't, and then they was in sich pore shape they took and planted 'em right there on that no'theast p'int. There was a little stumpy stone sot up over 'em, that still sot there in '64, to my knowing. Savvy in regards to them meters now do ye, Capting?"

"Ain't they never sighted now'days?" asked the captain.

"Guess not!" said Job. "Of course, there 's any God's slathers of jest sich works, but them meters 'peared to quit troubling the islant consid'-ble many years afore I come to locate there in '64."

"Locate there?" repeated the stranger. "Why, there ain't scursely room there to sling a cat."

"Godfrey mighty, you! she 's washed away half her bigness sence my rec'lection!" declared Skipper Gaskett. "I 've heern the ole ancient folks tell how they used to cut hay on the islant, and team it acrost the bar dry shod at half tide! To my knowing, the time I went there in '64 and put me up my little shanty, cal'latin' to foller lopstering that winter, there was quite a few feet of mejum fair sile; 'nough anyways so 's the woman cal'lated to have a flower gardin made ef we stopped over the summer. I 'd fitted me up a master gang of traps, and was extry anxious to see 'em fishin' and fetching me in a dollar. 'T wa'n't only a short time I 'd been hitched then, ye see, and time my bills was settled for the traps, and the shanty, and all the rest-part o' the chicken-fixin's, why I was jammed pretty nigh the wind in regards to cash, now I tell ye!

"This here shanty sot on the highest part of the islant, and that wa'n't none too high neither, for we like to have went adrift as 't was. I took and banked her all up good with rock-weed and pumple-stones atop on 't, and rigged me up a flatform walk down over them steep rocks to the shore, and then I says to the woman, 'Now let her turn to and snow and blow and ice up soon 's ever she gits good and ready! I 'll risk but what we 'll put in the winter complete!' s' I.

"Wall, for a month, mebbe, things 'peared to work all right. There was lopsters crawlin' off there them times to what there is now, and that winter, in pertikler, seems 's though nobody ever see 'em crawl so lively. The weather held fine 's a fiddle chock to New Year's, and I was some tickled, too, for my traps was in only 'bout four fathom o' water out here on the edge of the 'Honeypinks,' and 'lowing there come a heavy breeze, I cal'lated a slue on 'em would strike adrift sure, but they was fishin' so complete I kep' staving off shiftin' of 'em, and jest took chances.

"But right away after New Year's, seems 's though winter never cal'lated to rot in the sky, and jest took holt for keeps. She blowed half a gale the whole blame' time, was so tormented chowy outside 't was seldom ever I could pull ary trap at all.

"Fin'lly down she settled into one of them reg'-lar-built, ole-style, no'theast hell-rippers, with snow and slate; one of them proper ole long-winded fellers, ye know, same 's we use' to git for a fort-ni't to a lick. Prob'ly I seen her blow full harder 'n what she done that time, but she hung to it so ongodly long, blowin' right out endways day and night, that nach'ally the sea growed to be jest sun-thin' fairly scand'lous!

"Why, I 'll tell ye, Capting, what I see her do that time. I see her break a clean torch out here on the Bold Dick at chock high water, where your chart 'll give ye a plumb eight fathom! I see her cockle up, and cockle up, on the Ole Reuben, and then bust and run half a mile to a clip, them seas would, roaring fit to stund ye, and heavy 'nough to pitch-pole a seventy-four! I see her that time nothin' only one clean solid breaker from the Hue and Cry chock in to the Neck, and a streamin' white torch to the east'ard on the Broken Ground fur 's ever you could see!"

"Holy scissors!" exclaimed the coaster captain. "Gitting to be consid'ble hubbly, that is, ain't it?"

"Wal, yas, jest a few!" returned Job, dryly. "What I 'm coming at, though, is this here. The last night of that breeze there was half a dezen seas made a clean breach acrost the islant, and

only that ev'rything iced up solid as a pump-bolt with spray, I cal'late the whole bus'niss would gone for it clip and clean overboard! As 't was, we did n't lose no great sight adrift, but I took notice the islant growed all of two sizes smaller that one breeze, and come to take my traps, I knowed well they was chowin' to bits on the beach to loo'ard fur 's Cape Ann lights!"

"Most assuridly!" again remarked Squire Pelly, consequentially.

"Yas, sir, I would bated on that," said Job. "Next day, though, she commenced mortifyin' down so 's by night-time 't was softening up under foot, and nigh stark calm ag'in. Bimeby she up and shet in a dungeon o' fog, same 's she often doos, ye know, soon 's ever the wind lets go.

"We had n't ary one on us ketched forty winks the night before, and so we turned in consid'ble early, but, Heavens to Betsy! there wa'n't no sleep to be had there, for the set-fired rote a-going. Seems 's though the whole islant was all of a stiddy tremble, and be jiggered ef I could n't lay right there to bed and tell to a secont when Bold Dick broke, jest by the jar o' the ground un'neath!

"Then about once in every so often, a couple o' p'ints to the east'ard, crashity bang! Ole Rube he 'd git in his turn, and come down kerwollup

for every pound he was wuth, so 's to make the winders rattle in good shape!

"And the bell-buoy out there on the Hue and Cry, she 'd been all clogged with ice for quite a few days back, but seems 's though that night her ole tongue was thawed out in fust-class workin' order, so 's she kep' up one everlasting shindy same 's ef the ole boy hisself was afoul on her!"

"Fair horrid, ain't they?" said the stranger. "Jest take and let the wind once give up, and them things and the rote allus sounds double and thribble as loud 's they done afore!"

"Allus works that way every time!" assented Job. "But fin'lly the" —

"Most assuridly!" interposed the Squire, between gasps for breath.

"Jest so, Squire!" Job said politely; "but 's I was sayin', fin'lly, in room of laying awake to bed that way no longer, the woman she 'lowed she 'd lieveser turn out and do some mendin' to kind of quiet herself down like.

"Jest as she hauled the rocking-cheer up nigher the stove, Capting, we ketched a step on the flat-form outside, and there come one, two, three real good smart knocks on the door, so 's to make the latch rattle quite loud. Godfrey mighty! thinks I, who in tunkett can landed at this time o' day, and

sich a sea going! Must be some folks cast away, thinks I. Out of bed I lep'; and onhasped the door quick 's ever I could, but, sir, blow my shirt ef there was ary soul in sight! Out I steps onto the flatform and hollers, 'What 's to pay now, you?' s' I, but could n't raise a yip from nobody. Wal, then I took and looked each way of me round the shanty, and over them rocks, a-peering one place and another, and hollerin' stiddy, but there wa'n't a soul anigh. By fire! thinks I, be teetotally jiggered ef that don't beat tar-water all out o' sight and hearing!

"Fin'lly I give it up, and un'took to make the woman think we must been mistakened someways, same time I knowed well we wa'n't, by a jugful. It give her consid'ble of a start, ye see, so 's 't I misdoubted ef she 'd ketch ary wink that night. Next mornin' I turned to fust thing and give another good search around, but could n't find the leastest sign o' nobody's landing and troubling nothin' noways.

"Wal, sir, next day the sea had smoothened down so 's by noon-time I was able to git out on my 'marks,' but 't was jest how I cal'lated to find it, for out of the whole string of traps I never sighted only half a dezen, and them was two mile to loo'ard o' the 'marks!'"

"Sho!" exclaimed the stranger captain, sympathetically. "That did n't go fur towards buyin' baby no frock, did it? S'pose likely them traps stood ye a dollar apiece, ready to fish, outside of your time!"

"I made me a clean hunnerd dollar loss that time," declared Job. "'T was a corker of a set-back on me, but I turned to all feather-white ag'in that same evening to fit me up a fresh gang, so 's 't come to turn in I was dog-tired, and laid same 's a log till nigh one o'clock, she was, the woman up and woke me with a nudge.

"'There 's some person jest come up the flat-form ag'in,' s' she, all of a shake.

"'There, there, Clarry,' s' I, 'don't go to work thinkin' no sich rubbidge!' s' I. 'Seems 's though you was growing most too skittish for anything!' s' I, — but bedide, you! I had n't more 'n out with the words afore clump, clump, come the step ag'in up the flatform, plainer and louder every step chock to the door she come, and then whack, whack, whack, come them same three smart raps, so' s 't the latch rattled same 's afore!

"'Now,' s' I to the woman, 'you jest take and lay stock still where you be,' s' I, 'and we 'll soon show this fine feller what kind o' trees make shingles, see ef I don't!' I took and grabbed holt

of the gun that was allus kep' loaded up for birds, and outdoors I put her hell-bent, and like to broke my neck fust thing over the saw-hoss, she was that dark. Soon 's ever I could git me the lantern lit up, out I give it to her ag'in round and round the shanty, and down to the shore, and all over the lot I went on the dead run, till bimeby the woman she commenced takin' on so bad 'bout being left all soul alone no longer, why, I had to give it up ag'in. Don't say a word, though, but wa'n't she some haired up! I had to try my dingdest 'fore ever she 'd act half raytionable ag'in.

"'This here 's nothin' only some mischeevous young cub cal'lates to have a grain o' sport long on us,' s' I. 'He 's spryer 'n ary weasil, dinged ef he ain't,' s' I, 'but we 'll snub him up with a round turn yit,' s' I.

"Then I goes to the door once more and hollers, s' I, 'By the great horn spoon, you!' s' I, 'whoever you be, I give ye fair warning there 's liable to be call for an inquest round here some day, without you quit this 'ere!'"

"Wal, wal, neighbor," said the captain. "Cur'ous actions them, I 'll give in to ye. Never got no answer, did ye?"

"Yas," replied Job. "I rec'lect jest that very minute the ole Hue and Cry bell-buoy away off

here in the sou'-sou'west, she up and let out a couple of little easy cling-clangs acrost the water, kind o' mockin' of me like. That 's all the answer ever I got!"

"Cur'ous works, and no mistake!" repeated the captain. "But give her a rap full again, neighbor, and let 's we hear jest how you come out."

"Wal," Job went on, "the next night there was the very same works, and the next, and the next; and by that time the woman was so bad off I took and fetched her home to her folks here on the main. Set-fire! I cal'late she would had a fit o' sickness onto her in a week's time more! I left her there to her folkses, and went right off and see an ole shell-back by the name of Abner Haultaut, — 'Ole Swivel-eye,' they called him them days; one of these ole deep-water chaps he was; been off-shore all his life, and had only jest come back to the Cove a short spell afore. Never had no reg'lar stoppin'-place, ye know, but jest kind o' cousined it round like. A ter'ble tough ole creetur' 'Swivel-eye' was, and withey as ary wild cat, too. I 'll give you a little mite of inkling o' the style citizen ole Abner was. I seen him right here in this store turn to and chomp up glass lamp-chimblies in his mouth same 's pop-corn! Leave it to you, would n't he, Simeon?"

"God 's own truth, he would so!" asserted Simeon, positively. "Made mere nothin' of ketching a pork-bar'l by the chines with his teeth, and heavin' of her chock over his head! You take 'Ole Swivel-eye' about three sheets in the wind with rum, same 's he gin'ally made out to be, and he 'd make his brags how he did n't give a tinker's for no livin' thing ever went on two legs!"

"That 's what I un'stood to the time," said Job, "and thinks I to myself, 'Guess, by fire! he 's about all the one there is to this Cove will make me a proper good pardner down to the islant till we can gaft onto the creetur' that 's raising them ructions, or leastways find out what in tunkett about 'em someways or 'nother.' I went and seen him right away off, and asked him would he jest as soon go down and stop over a spell along of me."

"'Go down? Hell, yas!' s' he. Sure he would! 'Like nothin' better!' s' he; but afore starting, I slipped up to my brother's place out back here a short piece, and borried me a big Newfoundland o' his'n, — crosser 'n two sticks he was, so 's nobody outside the fambly scursely, without it was me, dassent come anigh him. We got him aboard the bo't, and shoved off quick 's ever we could, for there 'd been a lee-set herming up all day, and the

sun was droppin' plumb into a bank of snow, ef I was any jedge.

"Jest as we come to land at the islant, I happened to sight a big stick of timber that had come ashore 'way out on the no'theast p'int; so, quick 's ever I 'd got ole Abner to work firing up in the shanty, I took a walk round to see ef she was wuth the saving or no. Come to git over there, I took notice for the fust time the ole headstone was missin', and come to find out, be jiggered ef all three o' them graves had n't washed out all clip and clean in the big breeze!"

"The devil you say!" cried the captain.

"Yas, they had so," continued Job; "and honest Injun, you! ef it had n't been for the name of the thing, I would up stakes and quit that same night! I knowed well what was to pay then, and don't you think I did n't, but the thing of it was, the wind had backened into the no'theast, and was prickin' on consid'ble spiteful already. She was commencing to spit snow in good shape, too; so fin'lly thinks I, in room of bucking of it back in the teeth o' this breeze, and ag'in the full strength of the ebb-tide, we 'll stick it out to-night anyways, being as we 're here.

"I never yipped a word to ole Abner about them graves being goners that way, and the two of us

sot up knittin' heads into what few lopster-traps I 'd fixed up already. Abner he did n't forgit to wet his whistle about once in every so often outen a little kag " —

" S'pose you never teched of her yourself ! " interrupted Simeon, with a wink at the stranger.

" Wal, now, you ! " Job said candidly, " being as you speak on 't, I won't deny but what I may have sampled her a matter of once or twice, though as a gin'ral rule, I seldom ever tech o' the thing. My courage wa'n't none too good, though, after what I seen out on the p'int, and I cal'late a nip or two o' the red rum did n't do me no hurt. Ole Abner he wa'n't noways drunk, you un'stand, but by midnight I figgered his blood was that much het up so 's ef the ole boy hisself showed up, Abner would closed in along on him quicker 'n scat !

" She had shet in all thick o' snow by this time, and the flaws of wind sifted it ag'in' the window by spells, and whistled round the shanty consid'ble lonesome, I tell ye ! Fin'lly I turned to and stuffed the stove chock-a-block full of green birch chunks, cal'latin' to lay down for a spell. All to once the dog fetched a whimper, and that very same secont them boards down along in the flatform walk commenced to snap same 's they will in cold weather when some person walks over 'em, ye know ; and

by fire! then come the step; nigher and nigher every clip she come, with that hard snow a-squealin', and most every blame' board snapping un'neath of her!

"Abner he never waited inside for no knock, but slat open the door, and lep' out with a snarl same 's a blame' ole tiger-cat, and God help the feller ever he run afoul on that time, too! Most any living thing in the shape o' flesh and blood I cal'late he would knocked galley-west in half a jif', but I took fine notice the dog wa'n't no airthly account at all that time; he jest made a dead break for the door soon 's ever she was open, and off he put her for the shore with tail betwixt his legs, same 's ef the devil kicked him on end!

"Wal, I ketched up the gun and larntern and run out, though, as I say, my courage had nigh all dreened away till I wished myself well out of the scrape more 'n once. Ole Abner was hollerin' like a loon to have the light fetched down along, but come to strike acrost the flatform with it, I see there was foot-tracks in the snow there, plain 's the nose on your face!

"We turned to with the larntern, and traced 'em up chock to the shanty door, and there they jest stopped short.

"'This is what gits me, this doos,' says Abner,

and commences to scratch his ole head like mad. 'Whichever way could the creetur' went to now?' s' he. 'There ain't no back tracks nor side tracks, ary one!' s' he.

"'Whichever could it went to, then, ye pore half-fool,' s' I, 'without it was right *plumb into the shanty?*'

"Abner he up with that larntern, and give me one good long look in the face, and jest that same secont come a master loud howl from the dog, clean down on the shore nigh the bo't.

"'Now look a' here, you!' says Abner; 'I never signed articles for no sich ructions as this 'ere. You got anything special you want to git inside that buildin' to-night?' s' he.

"'Not the fust nameable thing!' s' I. 'Allst ever I want in God's own world jest now is to git off'n this hell-fired islant!' s' I, and that 's jest what we done, too, quick 's ever we could hustle! What 's more!" added Skipper Job in conclusion, "I ain't never sot foot on her sence, to this day, and never cal'late to!"

"Most assuridly!" puffed Squire Pelly, rising with great difficulty.

X

DOCTORS, BOTH HUMAN AND VETERAN

"I HEAR tell they 've got the diptheery up to Number Four deestrict there," remarked Cap'n Zenas Roundturn one winter evening, as he dropped into his customary chair with a thud that caused every lamp in Simeon's store to flare.

"Yas," responded Sheriff Windseye, "so I heern say myself, but I ruther guess 't ain't so bad as what it 's recommended to be. It 's that oldest boy of Siah Kentleses that 's took sick, and to my own knowing he 's had a bad swelling into his tonsilitis ever sence town-meetin' day. I cal'late it 's kind o' chronical with him, swan to man ef I don't."

"Wal, sir," said Cap'n Roundturn in his usual pompous manner, "that 's a consid'ble bad complaint, but I could turn to and mix him up a med'cine to cook that there swellin' no matter ef she was the wust case ever you see on God's footstool!"

"That a fact?" said the Sheriff, with some interest. "What 's the resate, Cap'n?"

"The resate, sir, is nothin' only my own affair," Cap'n Roundturn replied loftily, "but this much I don't mind telling of ye, and that is, I never run afoul on her in no two-cent noospaper. An ole sir that 's prob'ly forgot more about mixin' up med'cine than all the college doctors in this county ever knowed, he give me that resate one time as an extry big favor, and 't ain't my way to run 'round blabbing allst ever I know, same 's some folks doos."

"They tell me," Job Gaskett interposed at this point, "they tell me ole Skip' Spurshoe down on the Neck there is goin' to have his funeral Sunday. His folks allow how 't was the grip done him up at the fust send-off, and I think 's likely 't was. Set-fire ef I did n't hope we was through 'long of that dod-rotted thing, but seems 's though she 's struck solid ag'in down that ways."

"What 's the matter with talking high-toned like, while you 're about it, Job," said the Sheriff, jocosely. "I see by my paper one time where all them Frenchmen folks call her 'The Lay Grippee,' and seems ef we 'd ought to have the same priv'-lege, livin' here into a free country."

"Wal, you," said Job, "grip or 'The Lay Grippee,' I don't want no more on her in mine, but I 'll jest tell you one thing, and that is, these 'ere

blame' doctors is workin' her for every mite she 's wuth same 's they allus make out to everything else. I b'lieve they 're all imbibed with the same idee, fur 's that goes.

"They all cal'late to keep a man down jest as long 's there 's a dollar into it for 'em. Way 't was with me the time I had the grip, I jest laid there to bed and drinked the doctor's set-fired krawm till I could n't put up with it another secont. Take it some days I 'd r'ally commence to feel kind o' middling smart and kinky like, and doctor he 'd be sure to ketch onto it right away, so 's he 'd turn to and gimme suppn' or other would knock me out ag'in a damn sight wuss 'n ever I was, and so it went on jest that same way for nigh onto a fortni't's time, till one day I jest up and says to him right flat-footed, 'Doc,' s' I, 'I got my fill and to spare o' sich dod-blowed works! How much 's the damage so fur, you?' s' I.

"Wal, sir, he commenced right off to kind o' back and fill like, a-hemmin' and hawin', but 't wa'n't no manner of good, for I was jest riled clean through. 'Take and fetch us in your bill, quick 's ever you can git round to it!' s' I. I took and I paid him off clip and clean, and give him his walkin' papers in a hurry. 'Good reddance to bad rubbidge,' thinks I.

"Then s' I to my woman, 'You jest take and put her for the store fast 's ever the Lord 'll let ye travel,' s' I, 'and fetch me up a box o' pewgative pills, and a big-size bottle of Tookey's Balsam!' Wal, sir, she done so, and I turned to and got outside ten o' them great overgrowed pills so blame' quick you 'd swore I 'd allus had 'em into me! Then I jest downed that bottle of balsam right plumb atop on 'em, so 's to cut 'em like, in proper good shape, ye know, and afore ever I come to turn in that night, I up and eat seven more o' them pills! Oh, that 's a fact, sure 's ever you set there! The woman she kicked like a steer, but set-fire, you! I 'lowed I knowed what I was doing of, jest the same. When I want med'cine, *I want it;* there 's all there is to *that*, and my cal'lation is to take enough on 't to a time so 's it can git a good fair holt onto the system, and heave off the trouble root and branch!"

"Oh, you got the right idee, Job, but seems 's though that was a dod-blowed great dose you swallered," said the Sheriff, admiringly.

"She *was* a master great dose and no mistake," assented Skipper Gaskett, "and for two days' time I suffered same 's a blame' thole-pin; never was so dead sick in my life, but there, you! The wuss I felt, the more I 'lowed the med'cine was gittin'

in its work in good shape, and heaving off the whole dif'culty clip and clean. Fin'lly I come out on 't bright 's ary dollar, but my legs was consid'ble weak for quite a spell after. What I 'm coming at, though, is jest this 'ere; I paid out that ole devil of a doctor risin' of twelve dollar, and it cost me jest only sixty-two cents to cure myself o' the whole bus'ness!"

Here the high-pitched voice of Asa Fairway was heard piping up from the rear, and Asa himself soon elbowed his way into the vacant space by the stove.

"That 's jest the time your head was level, Cap'n Job," said he, twisting his face into a frightful grimace as he struggled with an apparently adamantine plug of tobacco.

"I tell ye these here college doctors is no good at all, — not a plaguey mite o' good they ain't! Ef only ole aunt Roweny Kentle was so 's to be up round ag'in, I 'd back her a-doct'ring ag'in' all the set-fired college doctors ever you can stand in a row betwixt the Cove bridge and the Kunkett line! Now I jest want to take and tell you a little circumstance I was knowin' to myself, one time. There was a gal used to b'long right here to this Cove that was allus and forever sickly and ailin' like. I ain't a-going to call ary name, 'cause

she 's living right amongst ye here now'days, and you 're all well acquainted along on her as can be, — a blame' great stout healthy married woman she is now at this day o' the world, but you take them days, and there did n't appear to be no heft into her.

" Her folks I know was gitting dev'lish anxious like about her, one spell, and they must paid out a slue of money for doctors' bills fust and last; but nothin' ever they struck did n't amount to shucks, and the pore little creetur' she kep' right on failin' stiddy, till jest by chance ole aunt Roweny Kentle she happened one day to ketch sight on her, and by fire, you! she 'lowed right off how she knowed all the way ever the gal would git any benefits.

" Up she took and footed it right straight to the gal's house to see her folks. ' Do you want I should turn to and cure that gal right up in real good shape for ye? ' says she to 'em. ' I can jest everlastin'ly make out to do it, and 't won't cost ye no great sight, neither,' says she.

" ' Wal, wal, yas, sure we do! ' says they right away. ' Wisht to gracious you would turn to and cure her up in good shape,' says they, though all time prob'ly enough they never had no great hopes.

"'Wal, then,' says aunt Roweny, the fust thing, 'Can you turn to and ketch me a good plump rat?'

"'Lord, no!' says the gal's folks. 'They did n't know 's they could make out to lay holt on a rat jest that pertikler minute.'

"'Wal,' says ole Roweny, 'all is, I'll have to turn to and ketch me one myself, then!' So down cellar she slipped, and ef you 'll b'lieve it, 't wa'n't more 'n a minute, 'cordin' to tell, afore up she come ag'in with a reg'lar ole baster of a rat right in her hands, a-squealin' and beggin', he was, like a son of a gun! She went right to the sink and drownded the cuss in a dish of water, 'n' 'en she took and cleaned him all up nice as a pin, and shoved him into the oven same 's you would a bird. 'N' 'en she commenced to heave wood into that stove, and she never let up a mite till that blame' ole rat was all baked up black and cripsy, in good shape. 'N' 'en she turned to and pounded him all up into powder jest as fine 's ever she could git it, 'n' 'en fin'lly she took and baked every grain o' that powder up into a little black cake.

"'Now!' says she to the gal, 'you take and eat that cake, so and so much to a time. That 's allst in the world ever you got to do, — jest take and eat her up every blame' scrap; sich and sich a chunk to a settin'.'

"Wal, sir, the gal went to work and done jest the very same way she was told, and time she 'd took up the whole o' that little black loaf o' cake, there wa'n't a ruggeder young one to this Cove 'n what she was!"

"I rec'lect that there case plain 's can be, Asy," said Cap'n Roundturn, repeatedly nodding his head towards Skipper Fairway. "It 's tol'ble safe to say you could n't learn Roweny Kentle no great about doct'rin', nor yit two or three others o' them ole women-folks there was here them days, neither. But you come to take it this day o' the world, and it is literarilly a fact that the gin'ral run of college doctors will play it on ye scand'lous ef ever you give 'em half a chance, and 't ain't jest merely human doctors that 's up to them sort o' tricks neither, for veterans is every inch as bad.

"Now jest you look at that there Jersey of mine that took sick last fall. I sot a store by that little creetur', and telegrafted to Bayport right away for the best veteran ever they could git holt on. Wal, sir, down he come a-flukin', with his kit o' tools and med'cines, and 'lowed he knowed jest what ailed her quick 's ever he clapped eye onto her, but there! to cut a long story short, that there veteran tried to come it on me the wust way. The minute he see the pore creetur' feelin' a little

grain easy and comfort'ble like, he 'd up and give her suppn' to make her slump back ag'in wuss 'n ever, same 's Skip' Job was telling of here, till fin'lly I ketched onto the whole plan, and packed the dinged tramp off bag and baggage.

"Then I jest took my own veteran book and sot down and studied her up in good shape, till I come to the conclusion there must prob'ly be suppn' lodged into the creetur's gullet. I jest takes the handle of a plaice-spear kind of easy like, and inside a minute's time there would n't been no trouble about her swallerin' nothin' ef only she 'd a mite o' strength left into her, but you un'stand that there swindling veteran had played fast and loose with her so long she could n't eat nothin', so I lost her outright."

This narrative led to a general discussion on the cupidity and ignorance of doctors, both human and veteran. Cap'n Isaac Windseye, the Sheriff, was especially caustic in his remarks concerning a new doctor who had recently hung out his shingle at Killick Cove.

"Did ever you twig this 'ere pore little shoat down here to the bridge?" he asked. "Seems 's though he can't never tell you hisself what ails ye. I 've took pertikler notice time and ag'in, and all the way ever he makes out to git holt on a blame'

thing is to keep asking of ye a stiddy string o' questions. 'Be ye sore here? Air ye anyways lame there? Throat the leastways out o' kilter, or head painin' of ye all?' and then prob'ly, 'Le's see your tongue!' The pore half-fool he can't never step right up and spit it out spango the fust thing jest what ails ye, same 's ole Dr. Gaskett used to, in room o' beating the bush and tryin' to worm it outen ye yourself! *He* was what you may call a doctor, the ole sir was; a real nach'al-born doctor, that did n't need to learn no trade at all; doct'rin' come jest as handy to him as eatin'. Used to haul teeth too, about as slick as the next one, and never pretended to need no tools neither, without it was his ole cant-dog, and one or two more he turned to and beat out hisself.

"Ole sir he was a reg'lar-built genii, anyways. I know I was to his house one time when I was nothin' only a youngster, and see him op'rate on ole Jake Kentle. Jake he come down the ro'd that morning with his head all wropped up, and 'lowed how he 'd walked the floor all night with a master toothache. Ole sir he jest took one good squint into Jake's mouth, and went right and opened the settin'-room door.

"'I'll have to git you to lay right down here, my friend,' s' he, and set-fire ef he did n't have ole

Jake flipped out flat on his back in the doorway afore ever he knowed it, with jest only his head into the settin'-room, and the rest-part on him stickin' clean out into the front entry. Then ole Doc he jest took and jammed that door to good and solid ag'in' Jake's neck with his knee, and hauls out the tooth about as neat 's ever you see! Strong 's ary bull, ye know the ole sir was, and soon 's ever he once got a good fair holt with that cant-dog o' his'n, suppn' or other was bound to give up, now that 's dead sure. I rec'lect one time he tackled Jim Spurshoe, and hauled out a big chunk of his jawbone, with two teeth hanging onto her, in room o' jest one. Ole Jim he sot out to kick about it some consid'ble little at fust, but soon 's ever he found Doc only cal'lated to tax him for one on 'em, why he 'lowed 't was all right, and r'ally appeared to think he 'd made out to beat the ole sir someways or 'nother. Set-fire, you! but ole Dr. Gaskett he knowed his bus'niss right up to the handle, and don't you think he did n't!"

"You better bate he done so!" cried Skipper Job Gaskett, who had been listening with evident pride to this account of his ancestor's skill. "I only wisht to gracious he was doct'ring round here at this day o' the world!"

"Folks is a sight sicklier now'days 'n what they

was form'ly," remarked Cap'n Roundturn. "I often rec'lect a little short piece some on 'em took and learnt me years ago about how to keep good and healthy, — run this way, like, —

> 'Hot feet and cold head,
> Is what Gin'al Washin'ton used to said.'

That 's how she run, and I cal'late that 's about all the way ever to keep clear o' doct'ring clip and clean. Folks gits so dod-blowed nash a-setting round the stove so much at this day o' the world, — that 's what raises mischeef. Their blood gits all het up and foul, like. I git so 's to be consid'ble nash myself by spring-time, but in room o' heaving away money on doctors, I allus make a practice of drawrin' off more or less o' the ole foul blood, — jest turn to and jab a jackknife right into the calf of my leg, most gin'ally, and be red on her consid'ble quick."

"I don't misdoubt a mite but what that 's full better 'n doct'rin' any day, Cap'n," said Job Gaskett, "but Godfrey mighty, you! 'T ain't every man feels jest like knifin' of hisself so-fashion!"

"Oh, fush! That 's nothin'!" declared Cap'n Roundturn. "That 's a mere nothin', anyways. When it comes to straightening up a finger or the like o' that, why p'haps you might talk. You see

that there finger, do ye?" said he, holding up an enormous crooked member for inspection.

"She ain't hardly titrivated up jest ship-shape yit awhile, but set-fire, she 's straight 's ary gun-bar'l to what she was afore ever I commenced work on her. About twice in a week I set down with a good big flat-iron betwixt my knees, and give that there finger one proper smart dressin' down with a hammer. I 've straightened her out one half a'ready, at the least cal'lation, and feel tol'ble encouraged now she 's coming out good 's brand spangin' noo."

"By fire, you!" cried Skipper Job, "you got the bo-ink-um right into ye, yit, hain't ye, Cap'n? I 'll turn to and down most anything in the shape of med'cine, and double up and thribble up on the dose ef I take a notion, but I ain't hammerin' myself out on no flat-irons! Don't it hurt ye most damn'ly, Cap'n?"

"Hurt? Wal, jest a few!" said Cap'n Round-turn, grimly. "So 'll them doctors hurt, too, like 's not, and then turn to and rob ye atop on 't. 'T ain't never been a habit of mine to take and play into them fellers' hands without I 'm drove to it."

The Captain then seemed to relax somewhat from his usual taciturnity in regard to such mat-

ters, and confided to his hearers several other simple home treatments of guaranteed effectiveness.

"How 's your Lyddy makin' of it these days, Humpy Joe?" he asked at length of a grizzled old lobster-catcher from the Lower Neck.

"Oh, wal, you," replied the man, "Lyddy, she 's on the mending hand now all right, ef only she don't go and git no set-backs. I call her full better 'n what she 's been for a twelvemonth. She 's so 's to nav'gate round the house consid'ble lively now."

"Who 's been doct'rin' of her this time?" asked the Captain.

"Why," said her father, "She 's jest been up to Baws'n there, and took a reg'lar course o' them X rays for a fortni't stiddy. The stuff 's everlastin'ly perked her up, too, and I cal'late it 's got the stingaree right into it!"

"X rays? Where 'd she git that to?" inquired Sheriff Windseye. "I ain't never heerd tell about no sich thing."

"Geewhittaker, Cap'n Ike!" exclaimed the other; "what blame' ole eel-rut have you been crawled up into the last five year, anyhow? Ain't you never seen in your paper where they 've been doct'rin' with the stuff off and on for years now; a-curing folks right and left; diggin' ole bullets

outen 'em, and all sich works? Any one would nach'ally s'pose you lived chock in from the ro'd somewheres! Don't you never read nothin', for king's sakes?"

"Oh, wal there, you," replied the Sheriff, rather sheepishly, "'pears to me I do rec'lect some sich a thing, but I don't most gin'ally read all them patent-med'cine pieces over and above close, same 's some folks doos."

"Wal, Cap'n," said the lobster-catcher, "I would advise ye to kind of git posted up on this bus'ness soon 's ever you can git round to it. 'Cordin' to my Lyddy's tell, there won't be no call for ary doctor to hang out his shingle unless 'n he 's fitting to work this 'ere X ray racket right plumb from the word 'go'!"

"Sho! I want to know!" exclaimed Sheriff Windseye. "Wonder ef it 's any good for rheumatiz?"

"Good? Course it 's good!" the lobster-catcher assented. "Can't be beat, I cal'late. Lyddy she 'lows how it jest knocks the tar outen anything ever was got up yit! But it 's ongodly costly stuff, though, unless 'n you make out to git it right there to the fact'ry where they make it, same 's Lyddy done. I dunno jest how 't was ever she got onto it fust, but seems 's though she went right to headquar-

ters there to Baws'n, and got it at fust cost; direct outen the wood, you may say. The ole head-doctor there to Baws'n, he turned to and stropped a thund'rin' great piece of two-inch plank right onto Lyddy's game leg, and then he took and clapped a big thick book atop of that, and took his ole machine and 'lowed how he could sight with her clean through the two on 'em, chock into her leg!

"Oh yas! Snicker now, you fellers, won't ye?" exclaimed the lobster-catcher, as a suppressed laugh was heard from two youngsters perched upon a pile of meal-sacks. "You jest set there and laugh and be blowed! Nary one on ye can read a word, I 'll bate high, and it 's a chance ef ever you learn to so much 's bait up a tub o' trawls, but you 'll set there and act same 's a pair o' nach'als all right, and resk it! Dod-blow ye, you lemme hear jest one more yip outen ye, and I 'll un'take to thump a grain of sense into ye, ef it takes a leg!

"Wal," continued he, "what I was saying of, that 's jest how that ole head-doctor worked it. He turned to and planted his ole machine jest so, and sighted chock through the whole bus'niss, and he says, s' he: 'Lady,' s' he, 'your leg hain't got ary muscle left into her!' No, sir, he 'lowed there wa'n't a vestich of ary muscle left, but s' he, 'Gimme jest a fortni't's time, and I 'll cure ye

up good 's ever you was!' Wal, then he up and give Lyddy a dod-wollopin' great dose o' them X rays; oh, a master jag it was he went to work and give her, 'cording to her tell, and 't wa'n't but a matter of two minutes or so afore the blame' stuff jest streaked it all over her whole system, unless'n only 't was the very tip end of her great toe, on starboard side.

"When she come to git down to that there, she jest fetched up all standin', and seems 's though ole head-doctor he could n't drive her the bigness of a rope-yarn furder, ef he was to go to the ole boy. Lyddy she says how he jest give his machine proper ole bungo a-trying to pump them rays chock-a-block down into that one toe, but 't wa'n't no go at all. Wal, she says he kind of scratched his ole head like, a minute, but seems 's though you could n't make out to stick him so easy, after all.

"He took and hauled Lyddy up nigher to the winder, so 's he could see good and plain through his machine, and quick 's ever he 'd give her one more good sightin', all of a sudden he fetched a grab for his big pair o' nippers, and be dinged ef he did n't yank a big long piece of knitting needle right outen that 'ere toe!"

"Look a' here, you, Humpy Joe!" put in Job Gaskett at this point. "I got no great ag'in' ary

tol'ble good liar, but I must say that 'ere yarn o' yourn jest knocks me galley-west! You take a man that 'll darst stand right up in his boots and git off a thing anyways like that, and seems 's though I 'd want to think twice afore ever I 'd trust him all soul alone with a red-hot stove!"

"Oh, wal, there!" said the lobster-catcher, coolly, "this 'ere ain't no ole woman's gossup-talk, by no manner o' means. I 'm giving of it to ye jest the very way it worked; no more, and no less."

"How in the name o' reason ever come the needle there?" cried the Sheriff. "Did n't your Lyddy never misdoubt nothin' ailed her toe, for king's sakes?"

"Misdoubt it? No! Course she never!" said her father. "She had n't never heerd nothin' from her toe noways, but seems 's though this 'ere big piece o' needle made out to be planted into her all right, and 't was jest that brought them rays short up with a round turn. You un'stand them kind of things ain't never cal'lated to go through no sich hard materi'l as a chunk o' steel, but soon 's ever that was took outen the track, why everything was all lovely ag'in, and ole head-doctor he filled that toe plumb full of rays jest like rolling off'n ary log; no trouble at all to him.

"Wal, Lyddy she stopped up there to Baws'n her fortni't out, and took them rays full strength every day, reg'lar 's clock-work, and come home by the Thursday bo't; that 's a week ago yis'day. O' course, she ain't fit for no wrastlin'-match yit awhile; I 've knowed folks spryer 'n what she is now, but she 's a master sight stiddier on her pins, and full better every ways 'n what she 's been for a long spell. Them rays has done a complete job for her, and there 's no good backin' and fillin' about it, neither. I cal'late whoever got 'em up is raking the dollars in hand over fist!"

"You can bate he is that!" the Sheriff said, somewhat enviously. "What won't they turn to and git up next? I dunno but what I might take and send off and git me one o' this feller's circ'lars myself, some day. I been suff'rin' scand'lous with rheumatiz of late."

"So do, Cap'n," said the lobster-catcher. "And ef I was you, I would n't lose no time chawin' of it over, neither. It 's fust come, fust served, up there to Baws'n, ye know."

"Oh, I think 's likely, I think 's likely," sighed Cap'n Windseye. "The thing on 't is, though, I 'm kep' so ter'ble close to the wind this winter! Seems 's ef I could n't make out to collect ary cent o' money from nobody! I never see the beat, yit.

Now there 's them two Grommetses away astern and to loo'ard with their payments agin, and I cal'late I 'll have to foreclose on that ole boat bimeby, and that 'll make three on my hands ; nary one on 'em fetching me in a dollar, neither. Then there 's Obed Kentle down here ; I can't git nothin' only wind outen him for nigh six months back now ; and up 't other ways " —

" Set-fire ef you ain't allus in hell's own hole, like, Cap'n Isic ! " interrupted Job Gaskett, rudely. " All the same, I 'm bating you can buy and sell every soul on us to this Cove, and resk it ! Jest take and leave alone o' them pore devils for a spell, in room of allus and forever hounding the life half outen 'em so-fashion ! I tell ye there ain't a man in town but what would n't lieveser owe ye chock to doomsday, sooner 'n to cheat ye outen your money ! "

" I guess that 's right enough too ! " sneered the Sheriff. " I cal'late that 's jest about the size on 't, you, but by the great horn spoon, ef some of these fellers don't come to time blame' sudden, there 's liable to be trouble ! I 'll un'take to learn 'em what trees makes shingles, ef ever I 'm drove to it, now you tell your folks ! "

Saying which, Cap'n Windseye angrily buttoned his long fur overcoat, as if about to leave, but glan-

cing at the clock and seeing that it was yet too early to warrant returning to the bosom of his family, he again settled back in his chair, and moodily resumed his usual occupation of whittling a stick.

"Job Gaskett," said Cap'n Roundturn somewhat later, "whatever appears to be the matter 'long of little Joseph Ezry Kentle up your ways, there? I heerd fust he was attackted with the ammony, but it seems much as six months he 's been housed now, ain't it?"

"Yas, sir, 't is," replied Job. "It 's all of that, and I won't say but what more. Wal, now, Cap'n, you 've gimme one this time, and no mistake! I 'll be jiggered ef ever I can tell ye what ails him, and I misdoubt most damn'ly ef nobody can't. The time they fust fetched him home from 'way up to the west'ard, in back o' Baws'n, where he was to work to, ye know, they 'lowed he 'd ketched the ammony, as you say. Ole marm Grommet she tended out on Joe Ez for a consid'ble spell, and she told our folks 't was the ammony ailded him, and how she knowed the sure cure for her, too."

"Wal, can't the ole lady seem to mix up nothin' to coöp'rate 'long of the trouble?" asked Cap'n Roundturn. "There 's consid'ble many claims she 's clean away up at doct'rin'."

"I know they do so," Job said, "clean away up in G, as the ole feller says. But ain't she some down on these here college-doctors, though! Setfire, but you 'd ought to hear her take and poke it to them kind when she once gits under way, full tilt! She 'lows she never yit see ary one amongst the whole tribe o' college-doctors that knowed a livin' thing in regards to doct'rin', without it was jest what he 'd got out of some blame' ole book or other!"

"Godfrey mighty, you!" cried Cap'n Roundturn, "there 's a sight more truth 'n poetry to that there! She come nigh hitting of it right plumb on the head, that time!"

"Oh, she ain't nobody's fool, ole marm Grommet ain't, and don't you think for a minute she is!" said Job; "but someways or 'nother, seems 's though she never could jest git holt of Joe Ezes complaint like. Joe Ez he had a master cough onto him, and fell away to most nothin', so 's marm Grommet fin'lly give out all round 't was dibeets of the spine ailded him, but it looks 's though she can't seem to strike no med'cine to corrob'rate along o' that 'ere neither, and lately they 've kind of slacked down on doct'rin' of him altogether. That is, he 's kep' right on dosing with these 'ere patent med'cines quite stiddy, till his woman took

and shet down on the cash to buy no more on 'em, and sence then seems 's though they was leaving of him quilt without nothin'. Someways he appears to have picked up a grain, too, lately, so 's to be up round the house by spells, but he won't never live to git outdoors agin, not ef I 'm any jedge!"

"Sho! You don't mean to say!" exclaimed Cap'n Roundturn. "I want to know ef he 's so bad off as all that comes to! Joe Ezry was allus a good clever little creetur' as ever drawed breath, but he made an awful bad slip-up the time he turned to and got married 'long of that set-fired ole trollop up there."

"You 're jest right he done so, Cap'n!" said Job, warmly. "I cal'late that 'ere miser'ble ole concern is wuss 'n whatever the itch thought of being! You know she made Joe Ez deed her every mite o' the property afore ever they was hitched. It 's a couple o' husbands she 's made out to bury a'ready, ye know, and it 's her cal'lation to plant pore little Joe Ez consid'ble quick now; that 's jest what she 's figgerin' on, and she don't make no bones about saying so right to his face, neither!"

"You don't tell me!" cried the Cap'n. "Wal, wal, that doos beat tar-water, that doos. Why, the property never 'd fetch over a couple o' hunnerd, all told, would it?"

"No, guess not that much," said Job Gaskett, "but she 's in a tormented ole stew to lay holt on it, whatever it 's wuth; jest fairly feather-white to be red o' Joe Ez, seems 's ef. Now I 'll jest turn to and give you a little mite of inkling the way that creetur' is carryin' sail up to Joe's, there. My woman she 's been in the habit of dropping in there right along once in about every so often, and leaving some little tid-bit or other to kind o' coax up his ap'tite like. I s'pose it 's a dezen times she 's told me about the way things was workin' there to that house, so yis'day, thinks I, guess I 'll jest take a peek in there myself the fust time I can git round to it.

"Wal, it happened only this very morning, come to turn out, I see a piece o' wrackage that had come ashore 'way down on that southeast p'int of mine, so quick 's ever I 'd eat my breakfast, I took a walk down there" —

"Find anything?" broke in Sheriff Windseye, suddenly stopping his whittling.

"No great of a prize, she wa'n't," said Job; "nothin' only a strip o' yaller birch wale-strake with a busted chain-plate hanging to it, but I clapped a line onto her, and then, thinks I, bein' 's I 'm down here this fur, I 'll take and go home by the ole ro'd, and stop in to Joe Ezes. Wal, sir,

there he sot into his rockin'-cheer with both feet shoved chock up ag'in' the stove, and I tell ye he did make out to look some drawed and peaked, now that 's a fact. He 's fell away scand'lous, Joe Ezry has, and I cal'late it 's a chance ef he 'd cast so much 's a shadder now'days, but I jest up and says to him kind o' chipper like, 'Wal, Joesy, sonny,' s' I, 'How 's the world usin' of ye 'bout *this* time, anyways?'

"'Wal,' s' he, ter'ble down in the mouth like, 'I ruther guess I 'm pickin' up some little, of late.'

"'No sich a thing, Joseph Ezry Kentle, you!' up and screeches that blame' woman o' his'n. Setfire, ef she did n't snub him right up with a round turn, quicker 'n scat. 'You hain't neither, pickin' up a hair!' s' she. 'You 're failin' every day stiddy, and you won't never live to see another spring-time, noways you can fix it!'

"Joe Ez he jest sot there rockin' away into his cheer, and give a kind of laugh like; 'lowed how he had to put up with jest sich discouraging talk from daylight till dark; yas, and often night-times, too; and he says, s' he, 't wa'n't no great sight o' help towards gitting of him onto his pins ag'in. Wal, sir, then 's jest the time you 'd ought to heerd that woman o' his'n take and say over to him! Ef

she did n't jest everlastin'ly read the dog-law right out loud about that time, then I would n't say so! Oh, she 's a curer from clean away back, that ole creetur' is, and I cal'late 't would kill a well man to be shipmates 'long of her for a six month!"

"Whatever 'd she say, anyways, you?" asked the Sheriff, interestedly.

"Say? What did n't she say, I guess 't is, more likely!" Job replied. "I can't rec'lect the half on 't now, but she 'lowed how he wa'n't no good now to hisself nor nobody else neither; jest setting round coughin' and wheezin' and blockin' up the gangway in the kitchen so 's she was like to fall over his cheer every time she cooked her vittles, when by good rights, he 'd ought to be to bed gitting ready to light out!"

"Godfrey mighty, you!" exclaimed Cap'n Roundturn. "The dod-blasted ole trollop!"

"Trollop?" repeated Job Gaskett excitedly. "I guess you 'll find she 's *some* trollop! Then she went on to tell how she 'd been and made all her cal'lations to go a-visiting that daughter o' hern over to Bayport this spring-time, and now here Joseph Ezry was jest balling of her plans all up, for nothin' only the reason he was too pig-headed to take and die when she allowed he was all good and ready! Then she give a flop round to me, and

says, s' she, 'Don't you call it a great note, Cap'n, ef I 've got to git fooled clip and clean outen my going to the west'ard, that way?'"

"Why, dod-blow the creetur's pelt, you!" said Cap'n Roundturn.

"Set-fire ef I wa'n't more 'n half minded to turn to and choke the wind right plumb off'n her, I was that much riled," Job continued. "She 's an awful stocky-built creetur', though, and withey as ary wild-cat, they tell me. I cal'late she 'd put a feller to sleep the fust clip without he was an extry smart dodger. And ugly! Wal, there! Don't never say another word! It 's seldom ever but what she 's so 's to take and snap the head off'n a five inch deck-spike, and not half try, neither! Same time, too, wild hosses would n't hold her back from tending out on every blame' meetin' and prayer-meetin' ever she can git to!"

"How in the name o' reason did Joe Ezry ever come to hitch up 'long of her, anyways?" asked Cap'n Roundturn. "Most everybody here to this Cove had ought to knowed what she was by this time."

"Wal, there now, Cap'n," said Job, "*you* tell! *You* jest take and tell the why and wherefore on 't. Blow my shirt ef I can tell, without it was she turned to and hove a spell acrost him, same 's them

kind has done afore this. She was a Moye, you want to rec'lect, and I s'pose there never was one of the breed yit but would try on sich works once in every so often, jest by way of keeping her hand in!"

"She never had no great prop'ty herself, did she?" asked the Cap'n.

"I dunno jest how well she was heeled," said Job. "She got holt of the ole Dan'l Clueline place, ye know, soon 's ever she made out to hustle ole Dan'l un'neath the sod, and it 'pears to me there was an eighth or some sich matter into the ole schooner Break o' Day, but then she was all run out complete; jest merely a clean bill of expense to the owners. The Dan'l Clueline place was mostly run out, too, and did n't fetch nothin' when she come to git red on 't. Then there was quite a sizeable wood-lot up there back of Oakum Hill she hung onto, and I thinks likely she owns it yit. Prob'ly she did have a little suppn' salted down, but anyone never 'd supposen a likely young chap same 's Joe Ez would tie up 'long of her stripe, not ef she was one of these 'ere millynists! It beats all, though, the way some o' them women doos make out to come it on a feller. But I want jest merely to tell ye what she up and says to me when I come to go.

"'Cap'n Gaskett,' s' she, 'I want you should take and send off for me right away soon 's ever you can, and git me a noo pair o' pants for Joseph Ezry to be laid out into!' Right plumb afore Joe Ez hisself, you un'stand it was; him a-setting right there into his cheer.

"'I 'm mending of him up a white shirt,' says she, 'and cal'late to starch her up in real good shape, and stow her away into his bureau drawer all handy, so 's to clap hand onto her jest the very secont she 's called for, but,' s' she, 'he ain't really got no fit pants to be seen into.'"

"Real nice soothin' style of talk for a sick man to set and have dinged in his ears the heft o' the time, now ain't it, you? Why, sir, she 's went to work a'ready and sent off and had one o' them big overgrowed bells come — one o' them kind same 's we use aboard a vessel, ye know, so 's to roust out the neighbors quick 's ever the breath is gone outen Joe Ezes body! There that blame' great shiny brass bell stands on the mantel-shelf in the kitchen there, alongside the clock, for Joe Ez to set and look at betwixt spells, so 's to kind of keep up his sperrits, like!

"Oh, I tell ye, it 's that 'ere ole trollop's cal'lation to hound Joe Ez un'neath the sod betwixt now and spring-time, any ole how. I think 's likely

she may leave him kind o' mull along till she gits them noo pants and the b'iled shirt all fixed up tanto like, but soon 's ever she 's real good and ready, I cal'late it 's liable to be Good-by, Joe Ezry Kentle, and no mistake!"

XI

DEACON SPURSHOE'S JONAH

A BLUSTERING puff of raw March wind direct from the sea made the few lamps of the store dance in their smoked chimneys as Cap'n Zenas Roundturn entered one night, attended by a burst of feathery snowflakes.

"Set-fire, you!" he exclaimed, stamping the snow from his feet, "this here wind is breezenin' on every minute, and no mistake! 'Pears to be canting more to the east'ard ef anything, too, and I would n't wonder ef we did n't have a little brush of wind and quite a flirt o' snow outen her yit."

"Nor I neither would n't wonder," assented his cousin Simeon from his high perch at the desk. "When I come back from supper jest now, I took notice the rote appeared to sound from well out to the south'ard and east'ard like."

"The wind will prob'ly haul chock out afore morning then," said the old man. "No, no! Keep your settin'! Keep your settin'!" he added with a wave of the hand, as a youngster vacated a chair.

"Wal, wal, bein' as you will have it," said he, gathering up his coat-tail, "I 'll jest set down a minute along on ye, mebbe," and with a jarring thud the Cap'n's ponderous body succumbed to gravitation, as he settled himself as usual for the evening.

"Git anything noways new and interesting like?" he asked of the company in general.

"No great, I guess," replied Asa Fairway, stabbing a shaving on the floor with his jack-knife. "I ain't heerd nothin' so very alarming, without it is they was saying over to Kentleses fish-firm this mornin' how Ephe Kentle's oldest boy had turned to and bought hisself a vessel up to the west'ard."

"Bought a vessel!" cried the Cap'n. "What for king's sakes has he got to buy a vessel with? He 's the one married the Spurshoe gal here a short spell ago, ain't he?"

"That 's him," said Asa. "Seems 's though he 's made a raise someways, and put her for Cape Harbor nigh onto a fortni't sence."

"I think 's likely it 's the Oakum Hill wood-lot they 've took and put into a vessel," said Simeon, from his desk. "The Spurshoe gal had that wood-lot up there the time the property was sheered up, and I 'm knowin' to it that Loop-eye Kentle over here let 'em have money on it only a short spell ago. He 's allus bound to git the big end of every

trade, though, or else he won't tech of it, and what he 'd let 'em have on that wood-lot would n't go fur towards no great shakes of a vessel, and resk it."

"Wal," said Asa, "allst ever I know is yis'day some says young Kentle's woman got a letter from him through the mail telling how he had gafted onto a vessel up there and cal'lated to fetch her down here soon 's ever this spell o' weather lets go. Guess he ain't drawed no great of a prize, though."

"Did n't say what vessel 't was, nor nothin', did he?" asked Cap'n Roundturn.

"Over to Kentleses there," replied Asa, "they say 't is an ole fisherman by the name of the Heart's Desire, and pooty nigh as ole as the north star too, I cal'late. Some on 'em says how she used to belong right here to this Cove 'way back years ago, and made out to be the wust kind of a Jonah, too. Seems 's though I do rec'lect hearin' tell myself about some sich a named hooker round here when I was a young shaver, and how she allus and forever was into some dod-blowed scrape or other. How about it, Cap'n Roundturn? You rec'lect sich a vessel round here?"

"Ef it 's the same ole Heart's Desire used to belong here to this Cove, I rec'lect her well enough, and ain't noways liable to forgit her in a hurry,

neither," answered the Cap'n. "And I might say I rec'lect putting risin' o' five hunnerd good money into the set-fired Jonah, and never so much as sighting of it sence to this day."

"I only jest remember that ole packet," said Simeon. "The ole sir, though, he often used to tell about her being sich a scand'lous Jonah that fin'lly no person would n't go into her at all. I guess the ole sir held a little piece on her hisself, did n't he, Zene?"

"Oh yas," the Cap'n said, "your father was into the mess 'long of all the rest-part on us, though he was lucky enough to git outen her so 's to pooty much save his bacon. Gin'ral Jackson! Did n't that ole creetur' make out to be some onlucky, though! Jonah'd right plumb from the secont her keel ever was stretched, and no mistake! But lord Harry! I would n't scursely believe the ole jade was alive yit. It must be some craft else that Ephe's boy has run afoul on!"

"Guess it 's the same ole vessel, Cap'n," said Asa. "She 's all the one there is by that name into the gov'munt book of vessels, anyways. John Ed Kentle over there he took and looked her up into that book, and 'lowed how the dimensions tallied to a dot with them young Paul Kentle writ home to his woman. Seems 's though gov'munt

could n't find no record of jest how ole she is, nor what place she was built to, ary one, for the both o' them spaces is left blank into the book. Young Kentle there, he says into his letter how she 'd been re-topped not so dretful long sence, and appeared to be consid'ble tight yit, but he said her gear was nigh all run out, so 's he cal'lated to wait and take a good smooth chance to slip home here. Said her ground-taycle wa'n't hardly fit for junk, but he was in hopes to scare up suppn' better afore ever he left."

" Wal," said Cap'n Roundturn, striking a sweeping blow with his cane at a heap of peanut shells on the floor, " 't ain't none o' my affair, but ef that young Paul Kentle ain't tired and sick to death of that trade afore many moons, then I 'll miss my guess, bad. It 's pore enough bus'niss gittin' harnessed up along of any ole run-out vessel anyways ; suppn' allus and forever giving up and going back on ye, so 's it 's nothin' only draw your wallet stiddy ; jest only a set-fired bill of expense the whole blame' time, but you come to let a likely young man go and start in the very fust send-off with a tormented ole Jonah that 's been the ruination of most everybody that ever owned so much as a timber-head into her, why, blow my shirt ef 't ain't a pity ! "

"Any one would nach'ally thought ole man Kentle would took a hand in this 'ere buyin' a vessel," remarked Simeon. "He 's old enough to rec'lect hearing tell about the ole Desire, and all her dodblasted tricks!"

"Ole enough!" repeated Cap'n Roundturn in a tone of much disgust. "Yas, he 's ole enough, ef that 's all, but Ephr'im Kentle never was nothin' only a blame' farmer, anyways, you! Long ago as the time he went cook along o' me into the ole Charity there, he never seemed to learn nothin' about a vessel someways, and would n't, I cal'late, ef he 'd kep' on going to this day. He allus appeared to me kind o' numb like; as ef he 'd lieveser have his nose shoved into some dinged book or other than take his vittles, any day! Ef only him or his boy, ary one, had jest yipped one word o' this thing to me, I could took and give 'em the whole hist'ry of the Heart's Desire from the winter ole Deacon Spurshoe turned to and cut her frame up there atop of Oakum Hill" —

"Fathers! you!" interrupted Asa Fairway. "She wa'n't built *here*, was she, Cap'n?"

"Wa'n't, hey?" the old man said, sternly. "What 's the reason she wa'n't? Guess you 'll find this Cove is where she was built to, and no place else! This here young Kentle's wife's grand-

sir — ole Deacon Spurshoe — he cut her frame up there on that very same wood-lot was give to Loop-eye Kentle here t' other day, prob'ly to git the money for fetchin' of her back ag'in."

"That 's some sing'lar, too," said Asa. "Bound to turn up here once more afore ever she died, wa'n't she, though?"

"Wal, it doos look that way, swan to man ef it don't!" admitted Cap'n Roundturn. "Seems 's though it was to be, like. It ruther puts me in mind of a master sermon ole Elder Pike preached up here one time thirty odd year ago. I never 'll forgit her. 'What is, *is;*' s' he, and 'what was, *was!*' That was his text, them very words, and ole Elder he took and give folks round here hail columby in good shape!

"But I sot out to tell ye in regards to the ole Desire, there. The ole sir, — that is, ole Deacon, ye un'stand, — he allus had a ter'ble hankerin' to take and build a schooner outen that Oakum Hill oak, for 't was blue as ary whetstone, and tougher than b'iled owl. I s'pose likely it 's all stripped off'n there at this day o' the world, but them times there was a sight on 't up there.

"Wal, the Deacon he fin'lly got a vessel all took up here amongst us to the Cove, and sot her up alongside his w'arft there, abreast of where the

schoolhouse sets now. He would n't have nothin' without it was the very choicest pick of culled stock go into her, and enough on 't for ary two sich vessels. Every blame' thing had to be through and through fastened with copper and the best of locust trunnels, and her deck-frame all kneed off so 's I cal'late the ole boy hisself could n't never hauled her apart. Ole sir he was allus a great hand to have things built solid, anyways, but he allowed how come to take a vessel in pertikler, that folks cal'lated to resk their lives and prop'ty into, and she could n't be put up none too stout. Cost like the mischeef she did, but o' course, that 's how she comes to be alive yit, for Lord knows she 's had thumpin' enough to wrack most anything that wa'n't as solid as a pump-bolt! Ef she hain't knocked a hunk off'n every laidge o' rocks betwixt here and Canso, 't ain't for lack o' trying her pootiest, now I tell ye. I kept the run of her set-fired scrapes after she was sold outen this Cove till long after she had growed ole enough to vote, and had dreened the last dollar out o' three or four sets of owners up to the west'ard!"

"Same time," put in Simeon, "there 's some pretends to say there 's no sich a thing as luck in wood and iron."

"I know a damn sight better, there is!" cried

the old man hotly. "Ain't no luck into wood and iron! Ain't that some sensible, you? I guess anybody that ever had much truck with vessels never 'd misdoubt it, and 'specially ef ever they had dealings along o' that ole creetur'!"

It should here be said that since connecting himself with the church at Killick Cove, Captain Roundturn lapsed into profanity only under excitement, and even then so rarely as to occasion an exchange of winks among his hearers.

"Why, you! To commence with," continued he, unbuckling his overshoes, "to commence with, she up and balked at the launchin' the wust way, so 's they was three tides gitting of her afloat at all. Folks all allowed then that was a forerunner, and I guess there 's no rubbin' of it out but what it was! When they was stepping the foremast, one o' the falls parted aloft, and down come the stick acrost the Deacon's back, so 's they took and lugged him home for dead, and for a month he laid there to home in sich shape he never give a tinker's whether school kep' or not!

"Besides all that, though, it stove up things on deck consid'ble bad, so 's there was a bill of expense for repairs the very fust send-off, afore ever the creetur' had been overboard a fortni't's time. Then right atop o' that there, one of the riggers

went to work and took a tumble from aloft, and smashed hisself so scand'lous he never struck another clip as long 's he lived. Inside of a week there come a heavy squall o' wind in the nighttime, and the creetur' turned to and parted her bow lines, fetched a swing round acrost the dock there, and jabbed her bowspreet kerplunk through the side of the salt-house on the next w'arft. That kind o' hung her up for a spell, but soon 's ever the tide come to ebb, she sawed clean down through that buildin' chock to the cap-log of the w'arft, and afore ever 't was low-water-slack, she 'd broke the bowspreet outen her flush with the knight-heads!"

"Only jest by way of practicin' like, that was!" remarked Simeon. "Kind o' gitting of her hand in a grain, afore ever she went to sea!"

"She never needed no great practice, I cal'late," Cap'n Roundturn said; "but bimeby they did make out to git her fitted out for a Grand Banks trip. The wind was out here to the south'ard and dretful moderate the mornin' she un'took to work outen the Cove here, and set-fire! the fust hitch ever they made, she mis-stayed, and piled up on the Fiddler's Pup. 'T was chock high water, and there the creetur' stopped over one tide, hung right up amidships on them great pickèd rocks, with all her ballist and salt and everything else aboard!

"Ef she had n't been as stout 's a solid block o' wood, she 'd broke her blame' back for sure, but as it was, she come off with only her rodder on-hung, and a couple of master jabs in the turn of her bilge, but o' course that meant putting of her on the blocks so 's to titrivate her up fit for a fresh start ag'in."

"Be jiggered ef she did n't make out to be a cooler, you!" cried Asa Fairway. "I cal'lated I 'd been aboard o' Jonahs myself afore now, but I never see a one same 's that 'ere!"

"Rank p'izen, that tormented creetur' was; jest only rank p'izen!" assented the Cap'n. "But as I was saying of, folks commenced to ketch on to jest what she was goin' to be, and quite a few of the crew turned to and yanked their dunnage outen her slap-bang. I would sold out my piece consid'-ble cheap, and I know the rest-part of the owners was awful down in the mouth over the prospects. There was plenty on 'em talked it round how ole aunt Polly had went to work and teched the vessel on account o' some gredge she might held ag'in' the ole sir. I won't say as ever she done so, but that was the talk, and everybody here knowed she was up to jest sich works ef ever she took the no-tion."

"You bate your life she was that!" put in Job

Gaskett. "It paid to allus keep on the right side of aunt Polly in them days, ef it took a leg!"

"Wal, I ruther guess!" said Cap'n Roundturn. "Folks had already commenced callin' of the schooner 'Deacon Spurshoe's Jonah,' but all us owners kep' on hoping someways her luck would change so 's there might be a dollar coming in to us bimeby. Seems 's though it wa'n't in her bones to have ary streak o' luck, though. She could n't never strike fish no ways they could fix it, and still the skipper was one of them ole-seed Kentleses, that never knowed nothin' else in God's world without it *was* fish; a reg'lar-built, out-and-out 'fish-killer' he 'd allus been counted; but fin'lly be dinged ef he did n't turn to and fetch her back home and hove up his job clip and clean. He took and give out all round how he never see her likes for a bloody Jonah in all his goin'!

"I was to the Bay myself in the ole George and Susan the time they fetched her home, but the rest-part of the owners made out to coax up a noo crowd, and fitted her out a-mackerelin'; same time, sir, to tell the honest truth, I don't really cal'late ever there was ary school o' fish struck this coast would let that set-fired ole Jonah come within gunshot on 'em! It did n't appear ever to make the fust blame' mite o' diff'rence how plenty fish

was, nor how well other vessels was doing of all around 'em; seems 's ef that creetur' could n't git enough even to grub her crew; but, mind ye, she never let up one grain on gittin' into all manner o' trouble, and running up bills stiddy.

"Seems 's though it never shet in thick o' fog but what she was atop of some blame' laidge o' rocks, or in room o' that, afoul of some other vessel, and no matter how it was, she was allus the one to git the wust thumpin', sure; and then, too, she 'd make out to drag ashore with both anchors ahead most any time when other vessels was riding to one, as comfortable as ever you please!"

"Hardly any Jonah in her blood, was they?" remarked Job Gaskett, sarcastically.

"Bedide, no! 'T was only us owners took the notion!" said the Cap'n. "Pore ole sir, there, he was the fust one to squeal. In three years' time that vessel had dreened him nigh dry 's a puff-ball, and 't wa'n't long afore some o' the others was in the same fix. The ole Desire she jest downed 'em one after the other, but I was doing tol'ble well them times into the ole George and Suse, and made out to take the med'cine a spell longer. Bimeby, though, things got snarled up into sich an everlastin' cat's-cradle, we all had to jest give up, beat! Nobody would n't go into her on no

account, and she made the owners a dead loss of rising three thousand o' money. We took and hauled her up here to home for a long spell, and fin'lly got things straightened out so 's to be red on her for a mere nothin'. I kep' track on her for consid'ble many years after that, and so fur 's ever I heern tell, it was allus the same ole story over ag'in."

"Ephe's boy said how she was sold this time to settle an estate, I un'stood," said Asa Fairway.

"That would be right in her hand!" rejoined the Cap'n, quickly. "I don't misdoubt the ole creetur' has settled a dezen on 'em in her day!"

"About how ole do you figger she must be now, anyways?" asked Simeon.

"Wal, there, you!" said the ole man, "that 's what I was coming round to. The time she was built was the fust year ever I took the ole George and Suse, and 't was the fall o' that same year your father went to work and bought into that ole molasses brig — what 's-her-name — over to Bayport."

"Centurion?" suggested Simeon.

"Eggsactly! 'Centurion;' that 's her. Wal, the next summer that ever was," the Cap'n continued reflectively, "uncle Japhit here, he lost the sticks outen the ole Paytriot down to Bay Shelore, and got towed into Garspee. I rec'lect that all

plain, for I was aboard on him the time he laid in there repairin' up, and that was my fust trip to the Bay into the George and Suse. You jest take and see ef he rec'lects what year that was, Asy."

Asa Fairway removed the pipe from his mouth, and drew his chair close up to a white-bearded old veteran who sat with closed eyes, slowly chewing his quid. Bending over close to his ear, Asa shouted, "Hullo you there, aboard the brig! Turn out, all hands!"

Uncle Japhet opened his eyes very calmly, and, with a wink at the company, Asa proceeded, —

"Rec'lect what year it was you twitched the sticks outen the ole Paytriot, down to the Bay, there, uncle Japhe?"

"Can't say 's I do this minute," replied he in a deep sea voice. "Lemme see, though," he added. "I believe it was the time ole Skipper Tom Gaskitt put the Marcellus ashore on the Western Ear, there to Isle o' Holt, bound home here with a trip o' fish!"

"Wal, there!" said Asa, turning away, "now we 're gitting at it. That ole 'pink' father had, — the little ole Fairdealer, ye know, — she struck out here on the tail of the Hue and Cry that same breeze o' wind the Marcellus was lost, and they allus said that was the night my grandsir Pel'tiah

died. He 's been dead and gone — how long, anyways? When was it grandsir Pelly went that trip to the Cape Shore along with you into the ole Regulator?" he shouted, turning again to uncle Japhet.

"You mean the time he got jammed so bad in the cable, do ye?" said the old man. "I can't never give ye no date. But that wa'n't into the Regulator, though; that scrape was aboard the dinged ole Heart's Desire, that was. Why, what 're ye trying to come at, anyways?"

"Ephe Kentle's boy he 's been and bought the ole Heart's Desire" —

"Bought what?" exclaimed uncle Japhet, putting hand to his ear.

"Gafted onto the ole Heart's Desire," repeated Asa, still louder, "and we was trying to git at how ole she is."

"You don't never pretend to say that ole vixen is alive yit, do ye?" the old man asked.

"Seems 's though she makes out to be!" bawled Asa. "Young Paul Kentle over here, he 's got holt on her up to the west'ard there, and cal'lates to fetch her down home right away."

"You don't tell!" exclaimed uncle Japhet, slowly lifting himself around. "Godfrey mighty! I want to know ef that ole divil ain't dead yit!

Hope her luck has changed from what it was when I knowed her, or else the boy 'll wisht to God he was un'neath the sod afore ever he run afoul o' *her!* 'Deacon Spurshoe's Jonah;' that 's what they allus called her here to this Cove them days, and not to blame neither! You fellers with boats better overhaul your moorin's, afore ever she gits here, for there 'll be a big breeze o' wind foller close in her wake, sure 's ever you live! Vessels allus cal'lated to let go their best bowers with an extry long string o' cable soon 's ever she showed up to ary harbor betwixt Cape Ann and Quoddy Head!"

At this point, Cap'n Roundturn leaned forward in his chair, and waved his cane violently in a vain attempt to attract the eye of uncle Japhet.

"Down hellum there, and let her come to!" cried Asa, nudging the old man gently. "Cap'n Roundturn is signalizin' of ye! Guess likely he cal'lates to up and speak ye!"

"That–there–vessel–was–wuss'n–ever–the–seven–year's–itch–dared–to–be!" roared Cap'n Roundturn, ending up in a fit of coughing.

"'Lows how she was wuss 'n ever the itch was!" repeated Asa, in response to a look of inquiry from uncle Japhet.

"Yas, yas, a sight wuss!" he said. "Young

Kentle, there, he may call hisself a consid'ble of a big herb, but ef he 's gone and hitched onto Deacon Spurshoe's Jonah, she 's liable to make him suffer same 's a thole-pin, without she 's forgot her ole tricks ! "

Meantime young Skipper Paul Kentle lay windbound with his newly acquired craft in distant Cape Harbor, as yet in blissful ignorance of her true character, so definitely recognized by the older inhabitants of Killick Cove. It appeared that the previous owner, having unluckily received a blow on the head from the jib-sheet block during a squall, had died from the injury, and since that time the vessel had remained hauled up, with no care whatever. Some earlier owner, elated perhaps at having secured her at a supposed bargain, had made certain repairs to her upper-works, but years of subsequent neglect had evened matters up again, and it was now only conjectural where the newer work joined the old.

Still, as far as could be judged by boring, the oak seemed sound in the most essential parts, and in her hold numberless bolt-heads, green with verdigris, bore out the assertion that she was copper-fastened ; a statement doubtless already dwelt upon by many impoverished owners eager to get

the luckless old schooner off their hands at any price. It was found necessary to have her top recalked before leaving, and this, with new running-rigging and some other unlooked-for expenses, had nearly exhausted the proceeds of the Oakum Hill wood lot, and left the young skipper especially desirous of getting home.

Two former shipmates of his on fishing vessels had been engaged as crew, but the wind, though scarcely a storm, hung tenaciously in the northeast, and the rumbling rote of the sea showed plainly that it was far too rough outside for attempting a long beat dead to windward in such a craft.

For several days this discouraging weather continued, but after nearly a week's delay, early one morning Skipper Paul roused his men with a cry that the wind had veered to the southward. In a few minutes the schooner's musty smelling sails were hoisted, and soon the decrepit old windlass clicked and squeaked as the three men threw their weight on its rusty brakes. For the first time in years, the Heart's Desire was under way.

"This ain't the chance I 'd pick for a trial trip," said Paul, glancing at the still sullen sky, "but it won't do to get dead broke so far from home. It 's breaking a clear torch outside there yet, and I ex-

pect it will make her old bones snap, bucking into this head-beat sea!"

And snap they certainly did, after the harbor light was rounded, and the stumpy bowsprit pointed towards the greasy-looking sunrise. Up rose the round bow to meet the sweeping surges, and down again it dropped with a swoop into the dark hollows, till water gushed in through both hawse-pipes, and the lurid east was reflected on the glistening deck. No lack of snapping, creaking, and groaning was there as the Heart's Desire strained her poor old joints in antics more befitting a craft of fewer years. Still, nothing showed signs of giving out, and after thus wallowing slowly along on her course for a time, the older of the two men, Jason Clueline by name, urged making additional sail.

"She 's good for it yit," he said, "and I 'd let her wear the stays'l right away, for we 'd ought to make the most of this slant o' wind while she lasts. Someways it don't act to me as though this had took holt for keeps here to the south'ard yit."

Accordingly the blackened old sail was set, but Jason's surmising in regard to weather proved correct. Until noon a moderate breeze from the south continued, but it then began to slacken, and when just at night the first glimmer of Shags Rocks

Light was caught far ahead on the lee bow, the vessel lay entirely becalmed, with sails slatting, and booms dismally creaking at every long heave of the sea.

"Half the wind we got would n't amount to no great," observed Jason dryly, as he seated himself on the rail for a smoke. "I run away with the notion myself we 're going to have the wind here to the east'ard now afore long, jest by way of a change like. We ain't had no easterly weather for nigh a day's time now, ye know, and there 's a loon off here to loo'ard been singin' right out loud for an easterly ever sence I come on deck."

"Hang the luck!" said Skipper Paul. "We should have to keep her off, and let her go for Bayport if we took the wind anyways fresh in our teeth out here. Them sails are so tender, you see, and then that old compass would be a nice reliable thing to run by if it should happen to breezen up, and shet in thick o' fog on us. I jest took this old file and half a dezen sail-needles out of the compass box, and I don't doubt they 've been there ever since the vessel was hauled up."

"That 's how we come to make the Shags Light so fur to loo'ard, then," said Jason. "The blame' thing must be all of a p'int out of the way! I set out yis'day to overhaul her, but we 've been drove

so with one thing and another, I never got round to it. Be hell to pay, and no pitch hot, I guess, ef it should take a notion to breezen on anyways spiteful. But where in tunkett has the Shags Light gone to all of a suddin, anyways?"

Sure enough, where was the light? Not a sign of it was now to be seen, though Jason went aloft and peered intently into the murky distance.

"It 's shet in, as I 'm a livin' sinner, and I cal'late we 're going to have it a dungeon o' fog where we be in half an hour's time!" he shouted from the mast-head.

But with the fog came a marked revival of the wind, and the vessel again gathered headway on what was guessed to be her course after making allowance for the supposed derangement of the compass. Until near daylight the light breeze and dense fog continued, when according to the judgment of all three, it was high time to make either the rote on Thrumbcap Island, or the sound of a whistling buoy some distance southwest of it. Jason's practiced ear first caught the buoy's faint moan on the port bow, when feeling then sure of their position, the helm was put up, and the schooner pointed towards her birthplace, about twelve miles distant.

Shortly after squaring away on their new course,

the southerly breeze again failed them, but after a brief period of helpless rolling, the vessel suddenly careened with a rattling wrench of blocks and booms under a sudden puff from the eastward. The staysail was at once taken in, and the mainsail soon after reefed, for though the fog was clearing, the wind steadily increased, and the sky looked wild and threatening.

While occupied with the mainsail, suddenly the lights and bare spars of a three-masted schooner were made out close aboard on the weather bow. Having no sail set, she was at first supposed to be at anchor, though it was soon seen that instead of lying head to the wind, she lay rolling heavily in the trough of the sea, while the noise of her great booms was plainly to be heard, as they brought up on the sheets at every heaving surge. Something was evidently wrong on board, and it was at once determined to speak her. The Heart's Desire was ranged up to windward, and above the brisk flapping of the sails all three men raised their voices in repeated hails, but with no response.

Faint lights issued from the binnacle and cabin windows, and it was made out that she had a high deck load of lumber, while the hull itself appeared nearly submerged, as though water-logged. There was no boat to be seen at the stern davits, but

further than this nothing could be learned without boarding, and until daylight, this was out of the question. Under the freshening wind the sea was fast regaining energy, and the matter bid fair to be difficult enough at best.

For an hour or more the Heart's Desire remained jogging in the immediate vicinity, her men meantime discussing various causes which might have led to the vessel's abandonment. Jason Clueline's explanation of the affair seemed probable, and Jason had served a long apprenticeship on the coast in craft of all description.

"I 'm bating ye," he declared, "that vessel fetched up on the 'Outer Ridge,' or else on one of them laidges betwixt there and the islant. I cal'late her crowd jest went and got rattled like, and give her up for a gone goose the very fust thing, — made a break for the bo't, and put her for the island hard as ever they could dig. Mebbe rum done it; mebbe they wa'n't acquainted; and p'haps then ag'in the creetur' was insured on too steep. There 's plenty on 'em up to jest sich works. But we 'll say she was plunked out here somewheres, anyhow. 'T ain't only about high water now, ye see, and she 's had prob'ly the heft o' the flood-tide a-lifting of her all the time, so 's long as she did n't go to pieces, she was more 'n liable

to thrash clear of the rocks and strike adrift ag'in."

At the first gray glimmer of dawn, Skipper Paul began preparations for boarding. The staysail halliards were unrove, and bent to a new coil of stout cable, fortunately bought in Cape Harbor. The other end of the smaller line was then made fast to a becket in the stern of a dory on deck, but Jason Clueline constantly urged waiting for more light before starting.

"It 's no fool's job to run a line aboard o' that packet even when you can see somewheres nigh what you 're doing of," he said. "There 's no call to rush things so as I see, for we ain't fell to loo'ard no great yit, and ef only she don't turn to and over-blow, and git so plaguey hubbly out here that suppn' or other carries away aboard of this ole sled, we 'd ought to twitch that craft in to the main afore many hours, I know! But don't kick no more over that compass being out o' kilter, for ef we had n't been jest so much off'n our course, we never 'd sighted her in God's world!"

Paul Kentle was now, however, unable to restrain himself longer. As the youngest and strongest of the three, he stripped off oilskins and boots; the Heart's Desire was worked up as near the other vessel as seemed prudent, and in a few minutes he

was buffeting the choppy seas in the dory. Yet the distance between the two craft unavoidably widened every moment, and every foot of progress increased the amount of sagging line he had to tow. Ten years of pulling lobster-pots and trawls had trained him to perfection, however, and at length he succeeded in gaining the top of the derelict's high deck load. Then making his way forward, after another hard struggle the large hawser was hauled in and secured fast to the schooner's windlass-bitts. This done, as Jason Clueline allowed the Heart's Desire to fill away ahead, and gradually bring a strain on the creaking line, Skipper Paul picked his way aft to the wheel, and began a critical survey of the craft so unexpectedly delivered into his hands.

That she was water-logged, and kept afloat chiefly by her load of lumber, was plain enough, for even the raised quarter-deck was awash, and in making the line fast forward, Paul had been at times nearly up to his waist in water.

Everything indicated a hasty departure of the crew. The sails were not furled, and were blowing over the side to leeward, while the vessel's yawl-boat was gone, and the falls swished to and fro from the empty davits.

Through the open companion-way a lighted lamp

could be seen swinging from a bulkhead; numerous articles of cabin furniture washed about in some two feet of water over the floor, and on a fixed table beneath the lamp were tumblers and an overturned bottle.

As daylight increased, it became more and more evident to the new skipper that his prize was no archaic coaster, with shingles driven in her butts, and "cow's-tails" of oakum hanging from the seams, but on the contrary, nearly new, and a crack vessel of her class. The elaborate wheel, the spirit compass in the binnacle; the unusual brass-work, and bright spars, were all noted carefully by the young skipper, and increased the feeling of elation that helped him withstand his memorable trick at the wheel. Soaked to the skin by the seas which continually broke over the logy craft's quarter; coatless and bootless; alternately beating his hands and stamping his feet, Paul Kentle stood watching the reeling blackened sails of the Heart's Desire against the stormy sky, as she tugged and wallowed at her difficult task ahead.

Several futile attempts at communication between the two vessels had been made, but the effort had been abandoned for an hour or more, when Jason's voice was again heard above the noise of

wind and sea. Paul jumped to the top of the deck load for a moment. Jason Clueline stood facing him with both hands to his mouth, bellowing something utterly unintelligible. As Paul hallooed in reply, it struck him that the old schooner ahead looked strangely low in the water, and on slightly shifting his position, a glimpse was had of the second man in his shirt-sleeves laboring steadily at the pump!

Here was a new complication, indeed, and one but too likely to result in disaster within easy sight of home. The strain of towing in so heavy a wind and sea had proved too much for the aged vessel, and her seams had opened. An hour more without mishap would probably put both craft safely at anchor in Killick Cove, but meantime those on board the Heart's Desire were likely to have pressing need of the dory, towing astern of the prize.

After nearly splitting his throat in vainly trying to ascertain the leak's extent, Paul determined to make sail on his own craft, though well aware that it was a risky experiment under the circumstances. In time he succeeded in partially hoisting the schooner's foresail, and this, though causing her to roll to leeward rather unpleasantly, increased the speed to a marked extent, so that soon the dull

rote of the breakers on the white-fringed coast was heard ahead.

There lay the Cove now but a short distance away; its clustered houses in plain sight, and behind them Oakum Hill looming up black and forbidding. Nothing further had been heard from Jason, though by frequently mounting the deck load, Paul noticed with increasing dismay that the old Heart's Desire steadily settled deeper in the water, and that the two men now relieved each other at the pump every few minutes.

Would his own craft stand up under yet more sail — the fore-staysail, or a piece of the mainsail, even? He determined to try it at all events, and was about to lash the wheel for the purpose, when repeated cries from the craft ahead caused him to leap in haste upon the deck load again.

Standing on the low cabin trunk of the Heart's Desire was Jason Clueline, and from his extended hands streamed the tattered remains of the stars and stripes, held Union down! This could only mean that a crisis approached, and waving his arm as a signal that he understood, Paul jumped aft, and hastily put the wheel hard down. Slowly the logy craft answered to it, and by degrees came nearly up into the wind; the old Heart's Desire doing likewise.

No time was then lost in pulling alongside the old schooner, where it appeared that Jason had hung on to the last minute, for the cabin was already flooded, and all articles of value had been bundled on deck in readiness for instant departure.

"There 's a butt started in her run, nigh 's ever I can tell," cried Jason, "and she 's liable now to slide out from under foot any minute! I r'ally dassent resk it another secont longer!" he added, apologetically, though in truth no excuses seemed necessary.

From the old vessel's appearance, it was only too evident that her career was over, and that not a minute was to be lost in getting out of her dry-shod. After cutting the hawser between the two craft, the men sprang into the dory with their few effects, and pushed hurriedly clear. Scarcely were they a dozen lengths distant, when the Heart's Desire, as though utterly exhausted by the prolonged struggle in this last attempt at atonement for a long life of misdeeds, slowly raised her bluff bow high in the air, and with a long, weary roll towards the shore, sank beneath the foam-streaked waters at the very entrance to Killick Cove.

Numerous spectators witnessed the affair from land, and long before Paul Kentle's prize had weathered the leaping breakers of the Fiddler's

Pup by a narrow margin, and laboriously dragged herself to an anchorage inside, she was boarded by numbers anxious for all particulars. The story of the old schooner was by this time familiar to nearly all, and when the details of her last remarkable exploit and tragic end were fully known, there ensued such a clattering of tongues in the village as had not been equaled since Cap'n Zenas Roundturn joined the church, and knocked off the use of tobacco in any form.

At high water, a score of volunteers assisted in warping the vessel in to the town wharf, when, after ascertaining the name and address of the managing owner from the government list of vessels, a letter was at once dispatched to him, the rest of the day being spent solely in wordy disputes over the value of the prize to Paul Kentle.

By noon the next day, the wind having moderated, a boat containing several men was seen pulling into the Cove, and shortly after, the redoubtable captain and crew of the good schooner Harbinger were standing on the wharf beside her. On striking, they had, as Jason Clueline surmised, very promptly taken to their boat and pulled for Thrumbcap Island Light, but, not daring to risk landing in the darkness, had waited under its lee till daylight. From the light-keeper's dwelling

they saw the Heart's Desire toiling past with her prize in tow, yet firmly convinced that a severe gale was brewing, had not plucked up courage to embark until the next morning.

But so far from being in the least cast down over the affair, the young stripling of a master remarked most cheerfully that this made the third craft he had "plunked" within two years, and vouchsafed the further information that his father-in-law, who owned them all, was "about as well heeled as they made them down his way;" that in fact, "he had any God's quantity of it," and could easily afford to lose still another vessel or two without having to call on the town for support.

In the course of a few days, this prosperous old party arrived on the scene in person, but from the nature of the first interview with his son-in-law, it was considered by on-lookers more than doubtful if another of the fleet would be intrusted to him immediately.

Naturally the owner at first tried the usual game of bluff in dealing with Paul Kentle, but finding this unlikely to avail, at length agreed to a salvage claim on vessel and cargo, through which the much commiserated young purchaser of "Deacon Spurshoe's Jonah" found himself set upon his feet in a manner exceeding his highest hopes.

There was afterwards some talk of attempting to raise the old schooner, but all things being taken into account, the project was at length given up. At high water not the least trace of her was to be seen, but at dead low tide some four feet of slanting, weather-beaten topmast marked for a time the last berth of the ill-starred craft which Deacon Spurshoe's daughter had so many years before, with unconscious irony, christened the Heart's Desire.

XII

THE "TECHING" OF THE VESPER

"LOOK at here, you!" Skipper Job Gaskett exclaimed on reaching the store one night. "Seems 's though some o' you fellers was like to git into hot water yit, afore ever you knowed it. I jest got a little dockyment through the mails to-day with quite a few of your names into her, all printed out right in black and white."

Skipper Job here repeatedly slapped his overcoat pocket, and nodded his head knowingly.

"Wal, don't go to work and keep us all tore out that way, Job," said Asa Fairway. "Out with it, and let 's we know the wust right off!"

"Seems 's though some on ye had been giving it away in regards to the teching of the ole Vesper that time, up on uncle D'rius Kentleses shore. Them summer-folks I took out to sail last year, they went to work and sent me this 'ere dockyment through the mails with a consid'ble long piece into her all about ole aunt Polly and Skip' Japhe, and all the rest-part. Skip' Japhe he 's all drawed out

here nach'all as life," continued Job, producing a crumpled magazine, while numbers at once gathered about him, peering over his shoulder.

"Here 's another place where they 've got the ole Vesper all drawed out, setting plumb upright on the beach jest the very way she done that time. How in tunkett do you cal'late ever they got holt of all that, anyways?"

"Oh, wal," said Asa, "'t is them rusticators' works all right. Dod-blow 'em, they 're allus and forever prowlin' round here summer-times, with their noses shoved into most everything that ain't under lock and key. Some on 'em got holt of the way the ole Vesper was teched that time, and jest turned to and wrote off a piece about it. Take and read her off to us out loud, Job; that 's a good feller. Let 's we hear ef ever they come within a row of apple-trees of getting the thing anyways straight."

"Set-fire, you! This 'ere 's a master long ole piece," as he turned the pages doubtfully.

"What makes the odds ef she is; you 're good for her any day," Asa said, cunningly. "Come! Set down here where it 's good and light, and let her go. Want I should loan ye my glasses, do ye?"

Thus urged by Asa Fairway and others, Skipper Job began to read aloud somewhat slowly the fol-

lowing account of aunt Polly Futtock's last and most famous exploit in Killick Cove.

"'At one of the rude little cob-wharves of Killick Cove, now marked only by a brown heap of kelp-covered stones, the little pinkey Vesper lay early in April some sixty years ago, receiving her annual overhauling at the hands of the crew, while her red-faced old skipper and principal owner constantly urged them to greater exertion by declaring his firm belief that Fourth of July day would arrive before they sighted Cape Sable.'

"Some nach'all, now, ain't it, you?" put in Asa, nudging the Sheriff. "Sounds jest like the ole sir, for all the world!"

"Look at here, Asy," Skipper Job said, decidedly, "I want you should quit shovin' in your oar every hand's turn, so-fashion. You put me out the wust way, and 't ain't no fool of a job to read this 'ere piece at the best."

'But Skipper Japhet Roundturn,' continued Job, 'though indifferent enough to the appearance of his weather-beaten little house in the Cove, was a veritable old Betty in caring for and decorating his beloved schooner. While, in deference to a time-honored custom of the village, he occasionally gave the unused front door of his lilac-hidden dwelling a coat of such green paint as might be

left to spoil after the Vesper was fully fitted out in the spring, yet with this scant bit of attention to the house the skipper's wife was obliged to be content. The appearance of the pinkey engrossed the mind of her good man to the exclusion of everything else, and though mightily desirous of being among the first to fill away in the spring for the Cape Shore or Grand Banks, not one of the many colored stripes on the little vessel's sides could be overlooked, and not a spar, block, mast-hoop, or bit of iron-work but must be carefully scraped and slushed, or painted strictly in accordance with the prevailing notion of what was proper on this class of vessels.

'In spite of many delays, occasioned chiefly by the fussy old skipper himself, late one afternoon the schooner was pronounced by him "fit to look at" above the water-line, and the crew were told to assemble on board again that night at high water to warp her in on a neighboring strip of beach for the purpose of cleaning and tarring the bottom, or making any repairs found necessary as she lay heeled down high and dry the next morning.

'This programme, however, proved most unsatisfactory to the youngsters of the crew, who, it turned out, had set their hearts upon attending a long-

talked of "Time" to be given in the adjoining town of Kunkett Harbor on this precise date. After some hurried consultation among themselves, the cook, Zenas Gaskett,' — "uncle Zene, ye know," said Job, — 'was selected as envoy to the skipper with full power to negotiate a treaty on any terms by which they might secure the desired day off.

'Accordingly, just before leaving the vessel for their homes in the village that evening, Zenas shambled aft where the old man stood puffing and sputtering over a much-needed toilet in a bucket of salt water.

'"Skip' Japhe," he began in his most persuasive tones, "there 's going to be a master great 'Time' over to the Harbor to-morrow, and all hands on us was cal'lating to row over in the morning soon 's ever the tide flows enough to git acrost the flats, — that is, o' course, allowin' it won't be no great put-out to you. Could n't ye manage to fix it so 's we can beach the vessel to-morrow night's tide, in room of to-night's?"

'"Guess not!" said the skipper, decidedly. "We can't go losing another day now, not for no 'Time'! What you boys cal'late on, anyways, you? Here you 've been all winter doing nothin' without it 's tending out on 'Times' stiddy, and any one would s'posen you 'd be kind of forelaying

to ketch a dollar or two now, afore ever snow flies ag'in! I 've spoke for the use of uncle D'riuses shore to-morrow, and the Break o' Day is cal'lating on it for the next tide. There 's half a dezen sail right to this Cove that 's most ready to clean now, and there ain't nary other strip of beach that 's fit to lay a vessel on without resk o' hogging of her.

'"We 're a good fortni't behindhand already; there 's the Nabob and Emblem got away a week yis'day, all on account of you fellers' dod-blowed sky-larkin' in room of buckling down to work. It 's going to be good and calm to-night, and I want every soul on ye should be aboard here by eleven o'clock at the latest, so 's we can get her grounded there on the beach afore ever it 's chock high water. I make out to know jest all about them Kunkett Harbor 'Times;' been to 'em myself afore now, and ef you young squirts was once to get over to this one, I don't cal'late there 's ary one on ye would have enough bo-ink-um left to end up so much as a thole-pin for the next twenty-four hours!" and here Skipper Japhet smiled grimly at his own humor.

'"No, sir-ee, sir!" he continued. "You be on hand here to-night ef you 're cal'lating to go along o' me this season, for ef there 's one on ye that

don't show up, I 'll turn to and heave his dunnage onto the dock so blamed quick, he 'll swear 't was allus there! I 'm willing to put up with most anything in reason, but set-fire ef I can stand *everything*, no more 'n a stone-drag can! "

'This determined stand on the skipper's part naturally had a disheartening effect on Zenas Gaskett and his companions. Further arguing was deemed worse than useless, but there still remained a card which it was thought best to play before giving up all hope of the " Time."

'Some little distance inland, where the post-road at length gained the top of the steepest and rockiest hill in this land of bad hills, there stood a long, very low, little house, the shingled sides of which always glistened with fresh red paint. The trimmings were of spotless white, and the front door shone resplendent under its recent coat of vivid green. Surmounting a white flagstaff on a small outbuilding, equally well cared for, was a weathervane in the shape of a trim little pinkey schooner with her mainsail set. Close to the back door stood a woodpile nearly as large as the house itself, with sides so square and even as to suggest the use of a plumb-line in its construction; yet notwithstanding such indications of a man's presence about the little place, it was tenanted solely by an aged dame

known as aunt Polly Futtock, relict of Skipper Adam Futtock, who long since had been laid away behind the meeting-house in the Cove. But aunt Polly's comfortable circumstances resulted from no unwonted and long-continued charity on the part of relatives or neighbors. Almost wholly to the universal belief in her extraordinary influence with the weather clerk did aunt Polly owe her prosperity, and though some there doubtless were in the village who maintained her power in other directions as well, her clients were chiefly among the skippers and crews of the many vessels then owned in Killick Cove.

'Among such it was firmly believed that she could not only furnish good weather, but also full fares of fish, if so disposed, and on this account it was deemed well worth while to keep on the right side of aunt Polly Futtock by tidying up about her little place in general, and guarding lest her wood pile shrink unduly. Few skippers of Killick Cove, and least of all superstitious Japhet Roundturn, thought it prudent to leave the harbor with their vessels until a generous package of tea, snuff, or tobacco had been left at her door, while there was always a ready market for the stockings and fishermen's "nippers" she constantly knit.

'Now the youngsters comprising the Vesper's crew at this time had reason to think themselves secure in aunt Polly's good graces, while Zenas Gaskett, as the donor of the elaborate weather-vane, perhaps felt himself entitled to special favors. Soon after dusk, therefore, they scrambled up the rocky hill behind the village, and here leaving the road, wound their way among the ledges of the sheep pastures in a cut across country to her house.

'As quickly as possible aunt Polly was made aware of the exact situation, and, with such extra inducements as the occasion seemed to require, was urged to intervene if possible.

'This she at length consented to do, though protesting that such action was by no means in her legitimate line of business, and was undertaken solely as an especial accommodation to her young visitors.

'"Go straight-away back to the Cove, and put the vessel on the beach to-night jest exactly how the skipper tells you to!" quoth aunt Polly Futtock, as her black eyes snapped, and a peculiar smile overspread her wrinkled face. "I set a store by Skip' Japhet," she said, "but there won't nobody want to go un'neath that schooner's bottom to-morrow! Mind, now! Take and do jest how he wants

you should to-night, and be out of sight and hearing before daylight!"

'Greatly relieved in mind by these comforting words, the young men returned to the village, and when the night tide served, turned to with a will, and warped the vessel across the harbor to uncle Darius Kentle's tiny beach between the rocks, where she was soon grounded in the desired position. To insure her listing in as the tide ebbed, a couple of hogshead tubs were moved to the inshore side of the deck, and then filled with salt water, while as a further precaution, both booms were swung broad off inshore also, and guyed in that position, so that no one felt the least doubt that the schooner would incline in as the tide left her, and be found accessible for work early the next morning.

'After a final look at the lines holding her to the shore, the skipper cautioned his men to be on hand in good season, and started for home, while they, after many guesses at aunt Polly's probable method of operation, also dispersed to prepare for an early start toward Kunkett Harbor.

'Just before sunrise the next morning, Skipper Japhet might have been seen, clad in his yellow oilskins, puffing along the road to the shore behind a huge wheelbarrow containing a tar-kettle and bag of shavings, several birch brooms for

scrubbing the vessel's bottom, together with a large bundle of oakum and calking tools.

'As he turned shortly to go down a steep lane to the water, a view of the Vesper was first obtained, and great was his astonishment at seeing her not heeled down on her side upon the beach, but on the contrary, standing bolt upright on her keel! Dropping the barrow in his excitement, the skipper rushed down the short lane amid a clatter of rolling stones, only to find the phenomenon more inexplicable upon closer investigation. Like all vessels of her class, the Vesper was of that deep and sharp-bottomed model known as "long-legged," yet there she stood upon uncle Darius's hard gravelly beach, balancing on her narrow keel, with no visible support on either side.

'"Set-fire!" muttered Skipper Japhet to himself, as he gazed at the miracle. "This 'ere beats tar-water, this doos! Ef the wind should take and breezen up a grain afore ever we can git some shores un'neath of her, she 's a goner, sure!"

'But now, poking down the lane with his stick, came half-blind old uncle Darius Kentle himself, to collect his usual fee of four and sixpence for beachage, though his errand was at once forgotten in the excitement at hearing of the schooner's condition.

'"Why, blow my shirt, you!" cried the skipper, "them two hockshead tubs of water 'll amount to full better 'n a ton's heft, and look at them booms there, chock off to the rigging, the pair on 'em! There 's nigh onto a couple o' tons' heft on that creetur's inshore side, and what in the name of reason possesses her to stand up so-fashion, I can't noways fathom — without it is she 's teched," he added, with a nervous glance around.'

Job Gaskett here paused, and drew his coat-sleeve repeatedly across a moist forehead.

"You 're doing complete, Skip' Job, you be," said Cap'n Roundturn, encouragingly. "I wisht ole Skip' Simon Alphonso Kentle was so 's to hear this read off to-night. Would n't the ole sir be some tickled, you?"

"You bate he would that!" said Sheriff Windseye. "Him or ole Hacky Sam Grommet there, ary one. The two belonged aboard the ole Vesper that time, and allus swear by all that 's holy they see her stand up all soul alone jest that way."

"What 's to hender their swearing they see her?" demanded Job, as though doubt had been thrown on the truth of the narrative. "There 's any God's quantity see the thing besides them, here to this Cove! One thing I will say, though, and that is this feller comes anigh to hitting of it

about right, so fur. Be jiggered ef it don't start the sweat a-reading of it off, now you tell your folks to home! Where was I to, anyways?"

'By this time,' Skipper Job continued, 'others had discovered the vessel's astounding position, and before the sun was an hour high, half the population of Killick Cove had flocked to the scene. Among the first to arrive were two other owners of the Vesper, who, like the skipper, were greatly concerned as to the safety of their craft.

'"We 'll have to turn to and block her up someways the fust thing," declared Japhet. "Where all them young devil's limbs of boys has gone to, I can't think to save me. Nobody appears to know a thing about 'em, and all the sight ever I see for blocking is to fetch a hoss and team. Prob'ly we can borry a set o' blocks over to Deacon Spurshoe's yard there, where they 're building the vessel."

'"Oh wal," said Noah Trunnel, one of the other owners, "fur 's ever that goes, I can hitch up and fetch down blockin' enough blame' quick, but the way I look at it, I dunno 's there is ary call to do no blockin' of her up. It kind of appears to me as ef we 'd ought to be consid'ble careful jest how we take holt of this here business. Between you and me and the windlass bitts, I believe the creetur' 's teched; that 's jest what ails her, and I cal'-

late the safest thing we can do is to jest merely stand by and keep hands off'n her till the tide flows ag'in."

'"Set-fire ef I don't believe but what you 've got the rights on 't; swan to man ef I don't, now!" Skipper Japhet said earnestly. "I 've run away with some sich idee myself ever sence I fust sot eyes onto her, but same time it doos appear awful resky to take and leave her be a-laying same 's she is, you! Ef it should take a notion to breezen up so much as a cat's-paw of wind, what 's to hender her floppin' one ways or t' other, and starting her whole bilge in, like 's not! Guess then there 'd be hell to pay, and no pitch hot!"

'"Wal, I know," said Noah. "It doos appear like chancin' of it, but still I 'm thinking you best leave alone of her, for all that. There 's been folks to this Cove that was up to jest sich works as this 'ere; now you know that as well as ever I do. Ef it 's laid out for that hooker to take and stand up there same 's she 's doing of now till the tide flows round her ag'in, why she 's going to set there, no matter ef it turns to and blows an ole hell-ripper of a breeze o' wind; but ef it 's the cal'lation to have her tumble over, why soon 's ever she once gits good and ready, she 's bound to flop, and you nor nobody else neither can't shove blocks enough

un'neath her bilge to hender her one mite! All is, somebody will make out to git hisself squ'shed out flatter 'n a pancake fooling round un'neath of her, and that 's all ever it 'll amount to."

'"Yas, there 's a master sight of truth into all that 'ere, Noah," admitted Skipper Japhet, "but still I should love plaguey well to find out how the rest-part of the owners is minded. There 's them two ole Miss Pikes up the road there; they hold an eighth betwixt 'em, they do, and ef the vessel is hurt the leastways, I cal'late the pair on 'em would be atop o' my back afore noon-time, tooth and nail!"

'"Them two be jiggered!" cried Noah. "You can't never make out to suit them two ole ma'shhens, noways! Gracious Evers, you! we ain't s'posed to turn to and run clean away out back here to hell and gone, hunting up every ole woman that owns a strand o' rope-yarn aboard that vessel, so 's to ask what she 'lows we best do when we git jammed anywheres, be we? Here 's a controlling interest and twice over standing right here now, all of the same mind that she 's teched, so let 's we jest keep hands off'n her! Fur 's ever I 'm concerned, I would n't go anigh her the way she sets, not for the biggest trip o' fish ever she fetched home from Canso, and where I dassent set foot myself, set-fire ef I 'll ask nobody else to go!"

'Upon finding Noah Trunnel's view of the matter backed up by the expert opinion of his neighbors, Skipper Japhet Roundturn decided to do nothing in the way of interfering with the teching, but to wait for the coming of another tide with what patience he could command. Meantime the non-appearance of the crew furnished an inspiring theme for discourse on his part, and he repeatedly declared his intention of discharging every man-jack of them.

'Soon after one o'clock the vessel again floated, but by this time the theory that she was under a spell had taken so firm a hold on all that no attempt at heeling her in was made. "Hands off!" was still the watchword, though the question of whether the teching would hold good over still another tide agitated the owners, and aroused the utmost curiosity in all spectators. Would the gaudily painted little schooner incline upon the beach in a natural manner as the tide again ebbed away, or would she continue to defy the law of gravitation for yet another twelve hours?

'Close to the water's edge Skipper Japhet paced anxiously to and fro, carefully watching each incoming ripple, and frequently glancing at his huge bull's-eye.

'"It 's chock high water at jest one o'clock," said

he at length. "'Pears to me the tide has pinched off a grain, by the shore, ain't she, Noah? Of course she ain't fell off none by the vessel yit, because we never hauled her clean away in fur 's ever she 'd float, for fear of being tide-nipped."

'"Dunno but what she *has* commenced to dreen off jest a hair, you," replied Noah, looking closely up and down the beach.

'"The tide 's pinchin'!" at this moment cried a boy near by. "I took and sot a mark right here, and she 's commenced to pinch, sure. Now we 'll see blame' quick ef aunt Polly has got a holt on the ole Vesper yit or not!"

'"What 's that 'ere, you!" demanded the skipper, excitedly. "I ain't called ary soul by name to-day, you tormented young imp o' Satan, you! What in blazes d' ye mean trying to heave sich works onto aunt Polly?"

'"Oh, wal," said the boy, somewhat abashed, "I dunno nothin' about it, of course, only last night I see Zene Gaskett and all the rest-part of your crowd a-kiferin' acrost lots up to her place there, like mad!"

'"There, you! Jest what I 've hung to all along!" cried Noah, triumphantly. "I see to once soon 's ever I fust come down, there was some one had went to work and hove a spell over that

schooner in complete shape, and I knowed myself ole aunt Polly up there is all the one to this Cove at this day of the world is up to jest sich works!"

'"Wal, see here, you," the cautious skipper put in, "I would n't go to work and blart it round out loud so-fashion! It won't do no good to talk it round, though I guess she 's all the one ever could do it now'days. And there 's them miser'ble bullies o' mine has every soul on 'em gone over to the Kunkett Harbor 'Time,' there! Oh, I commence to git the loom o' the land in good shape now!" he continued, bitterly. "Wal, we might jest as soon take and go home as to stop round here a-chawing of our tongues. That vessel is planted all solid for the rest-part of this tide, but blow my shirt ef ever I would thought it of aunt Polly, the way I 've allus and forever kept her in hard-wood all sawed and split! Set-fire ef that don't beat tar-water all out and out!"

'The next morning found the Vesper nicely heeled in upon the pebbly beach in readiness for work, but in such wholesome awe was aunt Polly Futtock held at the time that Skipper Japhet felt constrained to smother his indignation and overlook the escapade of his crew entirely.

'But to this day, as the great field of ice breaks up in the almost deserted harbor, and drifts slowly

to sea on the swirling ebb, many of Killick Cove's older inhabitants never fail to recall the busy times of springs long gone by, and to refresh their memories in regard to the teching of the Vesper.'"

Here Skipper Job closed his book with an emphatic slap, and gave a long whistle of relief.

"That the whole on her?" asked Asa Fairway.

"The whole on her? Ain't that enough, for king's sakes, you!" Job answered. "Set-fire, ef I don't feel more tuckered 'n what I would to be up all night savin' a deck o' mack'rel!"

XIII

THE OAKUM HILL GROUND

"How did you strike the fish out there to-day, Asy?" Simeon inquired of Asa Fairway one night in the spring, after the latter had spent a long day outside "hand-lining" from his boat.

"Never struck a one, you! Jest got skunked complete!" said Asa, disconsolately. "I never see fish so scurse at this time o' year sence Adam cut his eye-teeth. We tried 'em on the Inner Ridge, and we tried 'em on the Spring Garden, and on the Honeypinks, and fin'lly we give it to her chock off on the Bold Dick ground, but never struck nothin' at all without it was a mess of krawm jest fit for lopster-bait."

"Did you have a try on that little piece of shell-bottom jest to the nor'ard of the Dick?" asked Skipper Job Gaskett. "The lighthouse jest over Fiddler's Pup spindle, ye know, and the middle of the Hue and Cry in range with the third big ellum, counting to the east'ard, — that 'll put you plumb atop on her, and there used to be fish enough there in the spring o' the year."

"Nothin' out there to-day — not a thing," said Asa.

"Ef only you fellers could strike the ole Oakum Hill Ground someways, I cal'late you 'd get a trip o' fish," said Job. "Loop-eye Kentle he fetches in some master great 'steakers' right along now, and I misdoubt ef that ain't the very place the ole rat ketches 'em to!"

"Oh, I know blame' well he doos so," Asa said. "He 's got the 'marks' for the Oakum Hill all right, and is liable to keep 'em, too, I guess. No person else appears to be able to strike it at this day o' the world."

"Asy Fairway," said Simeon, suddenly, "to-morrow morning you jest take and make it your fust bus'ness to streak it right up to Mercy's place there, and borry you the ole pilot-book that lays up atop o' the shelves into the setting-room. Ef I ain't mistakened the wust way, you 'll find the ole sir wrote off the marks for the Oakum Hill, and stuck 'em into that book of his'n, all solid. I ain't seen her for a dog's age myself, but them marks used to be into her somewheres, now sure 's ever you live!"

"Wal, wal, you!" Asa said, "that 's something like! That 's what I 'll do, Cap'n, and obliged to *you*, too, I 'm sure. Ef there 's anything ever you

want I should do for you to help ye out anyways, why jest call on ! "

Lying upon its side on a little shelf containing the few books owned by Miss Mercy Roundturn was an ancient and much-thumbed copy of the American Coast Pilot, dog-eared and dirty, and stained by countless soakings in fog, rain, and salt water. For thirty odd seasons Skipper Reuben Roundturn carried the book with him to the coast of Labrador in the old pinkey schooner Trumpet, and when in a memorable gale many years ago the stout little vessel at last laid her bones on the desolate Magdalens, the old book was one of the very few articles saved from the wreck. As a pilot, it has entirely outlived its usefulness, since owing to variation of the compass the courses given in it would speedily lead to disaster if followed to-day, while so many changes have taken place in the appearance of the coast since it was compiled that the sailing directions are also wholly untrustworthy.

Miss Mercy was herself aware that the book had now no practical value, and was therefore somewhat surprised when early the next morning Asa Fairway came shambling up her path in his red fishing boots, and asked leave to look it over a few minutes.

" Look at her ! " she exclaimed. " Why to be

sure you can look at her all you want, and welcome, Asy, but she ain't the least mite of good to you aboard your boat, now I can tell you that! Brother Sim, I know he set out one time to run a course outen her, and like to have got cast away there to the Mussel Ridges, too. He allus has told how they had a dretful close shave of it, and I guess likely 't was that as much as anything made him quit goin', and stop ashore same 's he has sence."

"Wal, Miss Mercy," Asa said, "I don't cal'late to take chances running no course outen the book, for I don't misdoubt a mite but what it 's jest as you say, she 's anigh being a back number at this day o' the world, but what I 'm coming at is this 'ere. Cap'n Sim he was telling of me last night to the store how there was a writing somewheres into that ole book that give the marks for the Oakum Hill Ground. He 'lowed it was years sence ever he see it, but he says, s' he, 'it 's there somewheres into that ole book,' and in your ole sir's own handwriting, too."

"Well, well, you!" said Miss Mercy, "prob'ly it 's jest so, then! 'Oakum Hill Ground!' Land's sakes, ef that don't carry me clean away back to the time I was a little girl a-picking oakum stormy days up attic there to home! You take and set right down in the chair back of the laylocks there,

where it 's good and shady, Asy dear, and I 'll fetch her right out to ye."

So saying, Miss Mercy stepped back into her hot kitchen, and soon returned with the venerable leather-covered book.

"You would n't hardly believe," she continued, "how kind of queer like it doos seem to hear tell about the Oakum Hill Ground ag'in! Why, when I was growing up, 't was nothin' but Oakum Hill Ground, and the Spring Garden, and Joe Munroe's Ten Acre Lot, and a sight more I clean forget the names of now. How comes it we don't never hear tell about them old fishing grounds now'days, Asy?"

"Wal, you," replied he, taking the old book in his lap, "come to that, there 's quite a few that doos fish on the Spring Garden by spells now'days, but I can't say as ever I knowed jest the marks would put ye onto the Ten Acre Lot, though I would n't wonder but what there 's folks here to Killick Cove that 's got 'em yit; but you come to take the Oakum Hill, and seems 's though the marks was gone from here clip and clean! That is, there 's jest one man knows 'em, fur 's ever I can make out, and he 's so blame' mean he won't tell 'em to nobody; so there we be, hung up like, ye see."

"Who is it knows 'em, dear?" cried Miss Mercy. "Guess I can think, though, who it must be!" she added at once.

"You hain't need to travel fur to run afoul on him!" said Asa, as he clumsily turned the old book's yellow pages.

"Oho!" he soon exclaimed. "Here we have it, so quick! Here 's the whole business wrote out on a piece of paper, and pasted in here plain 's can be! 'Marks for the Oakum Hill Ground. Killick Cove, November 5, 1822. — Scant eight fathom at low water. Hard bottom.' See, Miss Mercy?"

"No," she said. "I can't make out a word without my specs, but you take and read her right out loud, Asy."

"Wal, 't ain't so ter'ble plain as what I thought for, come to look right at it," said he. "The ink has eat chock through the paper in spots, so 's the words kind of run together, like; then here 's another place where it seems 's though some person had spilt fire outen his pipe, from the looks on 't. Beginning starts off consid'ble plain, though, ef only a feller could make out to git holt of the rest-part. Let 's we see now, how doos she read, anyways? 'Bring the steeple of Ole Kunkett meeting-house to bear direct over the sou'west dry ledge

of the Hue and Cry,' — that 's plain enough so fur, but set-fire, you! 'T ain't noways right, I know! Never was so in God's world! That range would fetch a boat clean away to the east'ard of the Black Bess ledges, in a hunnerd fathom of water, I cal'late!"

"Well, but, Asy dear," said Miss Mercy, "prob'ly it means the big old yaller meeting-house that used to set there on the post-road most up to the Corners, you rec'lect, or was that afore your time, though? Burnt chock to the ground she was, one time when ole Elder Roundturn was preaching into her, oh, years ago."

"I jest barely rec'lect her, and that 's all," Asa said, "but ef that 's the style, we 're all adrift ag'in on finding them marks! Let 's we see jest for fun what it goes on to say about t' other range. 'Bring the dark strake in the woods on the south side of Oakum Hill to bear in range' — it jest happens there don't make out to be ary stick of timber up there, now'days; not a stick! Stripped right down to the bare ledge, she is! Now where was I to? Oh, here, I guess! 'To bear in range with the eastern c-h' — What in blazes is it? 'C-h-i,' oh, chimbly, that 's it! 'The eastern chimbly on the' — What house? Set-fire ef ever I can make out that, noways! The ink has eat the paper all

to flinders right here! Now don't that make out to be some aggravating, you?

"Still, I dunno as it makes much odds, neither, for I cal'late it would puzzle the ole boy hisself to put a boat onto the Oakum Hill Ground to-day from them marks, allowin' we was able to spell 'em out. Too bad, I swan to man! Jest as much obliged to you, though, Miss Mercy, of course, and hope 't ain't put you out none!"

"Not a mite, Asy! Not a speck, dear! Sorry you can't get no sense outen the thing, I 'm sure. It doos seems 's ef there 'd ought to be some ways to find out them marks, though, as many years as what folks has fished on that Oakum Hill Ground!"

"Wal," Asa replied, "the thing of it is, the Oakum Hill ain't been fished of late years, and that 's jest where the trouble comes in. According to tell, them ole fellers used to find the biggest kind of fishing out there in the spring and fall o' the year, but nigh 's ever I can make out, fin'lly it come to be fished pooty much dry, ye see, and folks got in the way of going furder to the west'ard, or else way out to them grounds off shore, there, till bimeby most the whole o' them ole seed-fellers that knowed the marks for the Oakum Hill was un'neath the sod, or else drownded dead and gone; so come to take it this day o' the world and seems 's ef all

the one that 's left here to this Cove that 's got 'em still is ole Loop-eye Kentle, and you know what *he* is prob'ly ! "

" Sakes alive, dear, you ! " Miss Mercy exclaimed. " It 's likely we ain't lived next-door neighbors all these years for nothin' ! I guess if it depends on him, — but there ! He 's all the nigh neighbor I 've got, and I s'pose it don't look jest right my saying no great, anyways. Don't he never go out there fishing into his boat, so 's you could kind of watch him like, or else make out to follow him up, someways ? "

" Oh, he 's fishin' out there right along, this spring," answered Asa. " It 's seldom ever he 'll miss ary decent chance to get onto the ground now'days, for there 's fish there ag'in, and no mistake ! He commenced going out there some time last fall, the fust ever I knowed on 't, but it 's no sense tryin' to foller of him up, for you might jest as soon try tracking a blame' loon to her nest, as to ketch that ole rat on the Oakum Hill ! You see he won't never dump killick out there at all ef there 's ary one of the other boats around anywheres, and come to take it after he doos git hisself settled on the ground, quick 's ever another boat shows up most anywheres in sight he 'll up killick and clap on sail for all he 's wuth ! Seems

as though you can't rig it so 's to ketch him napping noways, for there 's quite a few on us this spring has tried to work it all manner of ways to git the ' marks ' for the Oakum Hill outen him, but set-fire ef he ain't made out to shake us so fur, every dog-gone time !

" One thing, you see, there ain't no size to the ground anyways ; it 's nothin' in the world only a little mite of a shoal spot, the Oakum Hill ain't, with consid'ble deep water chock up to her on every side, so 's you might liken her to a sort of chimbly - shaped sunk - rock that them big overgrowed ' steakers ' loves to play round, and feed off'n, but you can see for yourself, without a man is extry good posted, it 's a ter'ble blind job trying to git onto the thing.

" Brother Sam he did make out one time to stumble right atop on 't with his drag-boat, but as luck would have it, 't was so thick and hazy like inshore of him, he could n't see the main so 's to git holt on ary marks at all. He took and stopped right out there till nigh sundown, hoping there might come a scale or a glinn so 's he 'd be able to see sumpin', but the way it worked, in room of a scale, she jest turned to and shet in so thick o' fog on him he could n't see a hole in a forty foot ladder, and the wind breezened up out here to the

east'ard so spiteful that fin'lly it growed so dinged hubbly he had to give it up, and p'int her nose for the turf! But he allowed how the whole business wa'n't much bigger over than the Odd Fellers' Hall to the Cove, anyways, and right atop on 't you 'd have about eight fathom o' water at half-tide, but he says come to shift your berth not more 'n may be a couple o' boat's lengths, and like 's not the lead would run out thirty odd fathom of line so quick 't would make your head swim!"

"For the land's sakes!" exclaimed Miss Mercy. "You don't tell me! Why, 't is a reg'lar-built chimbly-rock, ain't it, though! But I do r'ally hope to goodness you 'll make out to find it ag'in, declare I do! 'T ain't that I wish no hurt to my neighbor here at all, but it doos seem 's though an old man that 's got as much of it laid by as what he has, and all soul alone in the world too — I must say it doos appear as if he might quit going out o' here boat-fishing, fair or foul, same 's he will, and sort o' lay back a little for the rest-part of the time he 's got left to stop round!"

"There, you! That 's me too, every time!" cried Asa Fairway. "Would n't any person nach'-ally think, Miss Mercy! Why, ef only I was quarter part as well heeled as what ole Loop-eye Kentle is, do you cal'late ever I 'd bother to set another

gang of lopster-traps, or bait up another tub o' trawls long 's I drawed breath? Guess not, no great! I should jest turn to and buy me a nice snug little place up back here somewheres, and git me a good cow, and a couple dezen hens, and then you know I should jest figure on taking my comfort good and easy like! Prob'ly enough I should want me a fresh haddick now and then, and when I done so, I should cal'late to slip off here with my boat and ketch me a one without saying 'by your leaf' to nobody, but this 'ere acting same 's a tormented ole hog" —

"'Sh! Dear!" sibilated Miss Mercy. "Remember he 's" —

"Can't help it!" persisted Asa. "Sich works as them he 's up to is fit to turn a feller's poke, swan ef they hain't, now! Why, ef I was to turn to and go into all the snide tricks ole Loop-eye allus and forever has been trying on, I dunno, but seems 's though when it come night-time I would be skeered to turn in for fear God A'mighty 'd up and shet off my wind afore morning!"

"Why, Asy Fairway, you!" — began Miss Mercy again.

"He 's went to work and got a mortgage on half the places to this Cove — him and Cap'n Windseye betwixt 'em has, I was going to say,"

continued Asa, "and 't wa'n't only last week he turned to and took away the boat from pore ole uncle Isr'el Spurshoe down here! Did n't you hear tell o' that yit? Wal, that 's what he done, and them two was boys together, mind ye; went to the Bay together; been cast away, and growed right up together, you might say; but uncle Isr'el there, he 'd up and slat the clothes off'n his own back any day ef he see a man needed 'em wuss 'n what he done; that 's Isr'el Spurshoe all over, that is; but you take ole Loop-eye, and in room of giving ye nothin', he 'd allus rob ye ef he see a chance to git in his work unbeknownst, and as for lying, why I would n't believe him on oath no furder 'n what I can take and sling a four-year-ole bull by the tail!"

"There, there, dear!" Miss Mercy cried once more. "Don't take on so, son! Old Loop-eye, — er, that is, — old Mr. Kentle here is jest only what the Lord went to work and made him" —

"I got my doubts ef ever the Lord had ary hand in no sich job at all!" interrupted Asa with a grin. "But I must be jogging down along. Do drop in and see us, won't ye, Miss Mercy, when you 're our ways?"

Not long after this talk between Asa Fairway and Miss Mercy Roundturn, the dogfish "struck"

on the coast, and as was usually expected, at about the same date summer-boarders "struck" in Killick Cove. Now however beneficial these latter may be counted in other places, in the Cove the question of which were the greater nuisance, dogfish or rusticators, was often discussed. According to the popular idea on the coast, both were to be looked for simultaneously, and while dogfish were certain to drive all other fish from the shore during their stay, so the rusticators were credited with driving all business from the Cove, and were even accused of attempting to force the native population back into the junipers.

At any rate, after dogfish and summer-boarders were in full possession, boat-fishing as a business was practically abandoned, and though occasionally a party of boarders was taken out and afforded the mild excitement of hooking a beggarly scrod or two from among the kelps at the harbor's mouth, yet as a rule the fishermen laid their craft on the moorings for a season, and began preparing their gear for the fall fishing.

After this was well under way, Loop-eye Kentle, though sorely beset by rheumatism, started in, as he said, to get his winter's fish, but his leaky old "Joppa-chaise" was daily to be seen discharging its trip of fish at the town-wharf market, while the

few that found their way to the moss-grown flakes behind his barn were invariably of the nature contemptuously known as "krawm," and unsalable at any price.

Fish continued scarce this fall, and in general the boats were obliged to go a long distance offshore to find them, starting away from the Cove before daylight, and often not returning until far into the night.

But this state of things was exactly to the mind of Loop-eye Kentle, and he improved the opportunity by making use of his secret marks to the utmost. Judging from the number of great steak cod repeatedly landed from his crazy old boat, there was no dearth of fish on the Oakum Hill Ground this season at any rate, and Asa Fairway soon determined to make another effort at getting a share of them; so one clear morning, instead of running his boat broad offshore toward the distant grounds he and the others had lately been compelled to seek, he headed her a few miles to the eastward, and then hove to until sunrise.

It proved just such a chance as he hoped for; there was no haze to dim the sun's brightness, and the sea was ruffled by a brisk morning breeze, so that to a person looking eastward toward the sun, its blaze upon the dancing waters was almost blinding.

By the aid of the old canvas-covered spy-glass Asa had brought with him, Loop-eye Kentle was presently discovered stealing out from under the high land in his black-sailed old craft, and in course of time dropping killick upon what was presumably the Oakum Hill Ground.

Then Asa put his tiller up, and keeping as nearly as he could judge directly in the wake of the dazzling sun blaze, attempted to put to the test his latest plan for stealing a march upon the foxy old fisherman.

Half an hour passed, and under the freshening breeze he was then at a distance when Loop-eye Kentle would commonly have taken the alarm and left post-haste, for he usually allowed no boat to approach within a mile or two. Nearer and nearer drew the trim little jigger, and the dark object ahead rapidly grew larger, till Asa Fairway chuckled to himself at the apparent success of his scheme.

"Ef our bird won't rise for another five minutes," said he to his boy, "I 'll resk but what we 'll be able to sound out that ground, afore noontime anyways!"

Five minutes, ten minutes more, and still no movement of the lone figure in the boat ahead.

"Guess he must be gaftin' 'em in solid this morning!" said the boy. "Can't seem to see him

move no great, neither. 'Pears to be jest setting there takin' his comfort like."

"I see he doos so," his father said. "Prob'ly cal'lates every blessed hooker to the Cove is chock out on the Bold Dick by this time o' day, for sure! It looks to me as ef we 'd scored on him at last! Ef he 's on the Oakum Hill, I 'll have the marks spite o' fate, for 't is as clear 's a bell to the west'ard!"

"What you going to do, dad?" asked the boy. "Going to hail him, or jest let her run down onto him till he looks round?"

"Guess we might as well run to loo'ard a grain, and shoot her up alongside, ef he don't twig us fust. Be jiggered ef this ain't a proper surprise-party for ole Loop-eye! What d' ye s'pose ails the ole divil that makes him set there humped up sideways, so-fashion? Would n't wonder but what he 's sick, like!"

The next moment Asa's boat ranged up close to the side of the other, and a quick look at its silent occupant showed unmistakably that he had dropped his killick for the last time. On the coarse shingle ballast in the boat's bottom lay an immense cod wound up in a snarl of wet line, and as yet hardly through its gasping.

"My God! Elishy Kentle!" muttered Asa

Fairway. "Ef you hain't made out to git snubbed up some short!"

Without another word he reached for the sounding-lead, and let it run the line swiftly over the boat's side. Then he began hauling it up again, measuring the fathoms with his arms as he did so.

"*Is* it the Oakum Hill, dad?" asked the white-faced boy, anxiously.

"Six, — seven, — eight fathom, and rocky bottom. It lacks an hour to low water yit. Yas, son, I should say it was!"

In this way Loop-eye Kentle gave away his cherished secret, and the Oakum Hill Ground again became common property of the boat fishermen at Killick Cove.

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